



General Assembly

Fifty-first Session

16th plenary meeting

Tuesday, 1 October 1996, 10 a.m.

New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Razali Ismail (Malaysia)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda Item 9 (continued)

General debate

The President: I call first on the Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Romania, His Excellency Mr. Teodor Viorel Melescanu.

Mr. Melescanu (Romania) (interpretation from French): I have the particular pleasure of congratulating you, Sir, on your election as President of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly and of expressing our satisfaction at seeing in such a high position the representative of a country and a region so widely appreciated for their traditions and dynamism. I am convinced that your experience and your qualities as an eminent diplomat will facilitate the proceedings and the successful outcome of this session. I would like also to express our thanks to your predecessor, Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral of Portugal, for the able manner in which he directed the previous session of the General Assembly.

Allow me to take this opportunity to express our high appreciation for the remarkable activity carried out with such dedication since 1992 by the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, to the benefit of the United Nations.

The Assembly has gathered again not only to review recent regional and world developments or to survey last

year's results, but also to discuss especially the prospects and challenges we are facing at the threshold of the twenty-first century.

We are essentially called upon to reflect and act jointly on establishing an international system that can guarantee security, stability, progress and prosperity for all. The United Nations is certainly the pillar of such a system. The conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which we have just signed, is proof of this. We are among those who consider that we now have a historic opportunity to insure world security and stability through the establishment of democratic institutions, sustainable development, respect for human rights and social justice. This requires better international cooperation and a new spirit of partnership among all countries.

Romania intends to contribute to this common effort through consolidation of its achievements in the building of a new democratic society based on the rule of law, respect for human rights and a market economy, with a view to establishing itself as a stabilizing factor in the region.

In referring to some of the significant events of the past year, I will recall that our macro-economic policy and the progress we have made in the establishment of institutions adapted to a market economy have led to a steady improvement of economic performance. The private sector has become preponderant in our gross domestic product. In order to overcome the difficulties of



transition and to prepare for integration into the European Union, Romania has received substantial assistance from the European Union and its members. The United States has granted Romania permanent most favoured nation status. My country has become a full member of the Central European Initiative and next year will become part of the Central European free trade agreement. The signing of a Treaty of Understanding, Cooperation and Good-Neighbourliness between Romania and Hungary was a significant event not only for our historic reconciliation, but also for stability in Central Europe.

I would also like to take note of my country's active participation in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's Partnership for Peace programme and in the Implementation Forces operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. These strengthen our belief that a favourable decision will be taken on our integration into the Atlantic Alliance.

At the subregional level, Romania supported the measures aimed at the advancement of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and of the process of stability and good-neighbourly relations in south-east Europe, which is also the subject of initiatives by the European Union and the United States. Aware of the importance of the democratization process, the Romanian Government has decided to host the third International Conference on New or Restored Democracies in Bucharest in early September 1997.

All these developments and initiatives testify to my country's willingness to act as a credible and responsible partner in international affairs and as a stabilizing factor and source of security in Europe and the world.

On the occasion of the commemorative meeting held on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Charter of United Nations, numerous heads of State — including the President of Romania — pointed out that the Organization can and should play a greater role in international relations in order to respond more effectively to global challenges. It is becoming increasingly evident that we are at a point in history when numerous problems have to be reconsidered from a global perspective if we are to forge a common vision wherein the individual is the focus of our policies. The main problem to be solved at the dawn of the third millennium is finding the appropriate synthesis between the general aspiration to universality and the individual aspiration to identity.

The series of major global conferences organized by the United Nations over these past five years have led to a new integrated concept of sustainable development focused on the human being.

Now that we are in the process of revitalizing, strengthening and reforming the United Nations system, including a limited enlargement of the Security Council, we consider it timely and useful to capitalize on these achievements. It would also be desirable to agree on an integrated common vision of development and on a list of priorities that would inspire and guide the general process of renewal of the United Nations. By acting in this way, we will be able to facilitate our current objective, as long as the working groups established by the General Assembly hasten their achievement of balanced and realistic results.

Along with the other Member States, Romania also considers that the moment has come to proceed to an expansion of the membership of the Security Council, both in the category of permanent members — for which Germany and Japan are preeminently qualified by their importance in international affairs — as in the category of non-permanent members. This should be done through an agreed formula, based on proposals already put forward, such as the Italian, which represents a good basis for ensuring that an increased number of States — including those of central and eastern Europe — be represented in the Council. In short, a special meeting of the General Assembly should be called on the results of the reform of the United Nations system.

Having made these general remarks, I would like to make a few comments on particular issues of our agenda.

First, with regard to crisis and conflict management, it is clearly and primarily the responsibility of the parties directly involved to put an end to conflict and to restore peace and security. We underscore the importance we attach to dialogue as a means of reaching negotiated solutions by the parties directly concerned.

We will contribute to the establishment of normal relations and the full implementation of the Dayton Agreement among the countries of the former Yugoslavia, including the lifting of the sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. We welcomed with interest the initiatives on the economic reconstruction of the region and are fully prepared to take an active part in this process, including through joint cooperation projects with neighbouring countries.

We express our deep concern over the recent worrying developments in the Middle East peace process which are the object of Security Council resolution 1073 (1996). We welcome the United States initiative aimed at the resumption of negotiations between the parties on the basis of the principles agreed upon in Madrid and Oslo, as they represent the only way to build a just and lasting peace. Romania recognizes the necessity of strengthening regional economic cooperation in support of the peace process in the Middle East and is actively involved in the multilateral working groups.

We are still concerned about the ongoing, complex and uncertain situation in the eastern part of the Republic of Moldova and we reaffirm the necessity for an unconditional and orderly withdrawal of foreign troops from the Transdniestrian region.

We accord due attention to all initiatives aimed at any process that could lead to a lasting peace in the Korean peninsula and in other regions of tension and conflict.

As the main guarantor of international peace and security, the United Nations should participate more actively in the prevention and management of crises by employing flexible peace instruments, including preventive diplomacy and peace-keeping operations. The experience gained by contributing States — including Romania, particularly as a result of its significant participation in the United Nations peace-keeping Mission in Angola — highlights the necessity of increasing rapid-reaction capacity by improving the standby system and other measures aimed at the rapid deployment of new peace-keeping operations and the efficient management of current ones.

With regard to sanctions, Romania, which has been deeply affected by the strict implementation of economic sanctions, especially in the case of the former Yugoslavia, believes that the United Nations should play a larger role in the process of compensating third countries so that the efficiency and credibility of Security Council actions in this area can be preserved.

Secondly, I would like to make some comments in connection with non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament. As a party to the process since its inception, Romania welcomed with satisfaction the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty. This major step represents a crucial stage in the fulfilment of one of the main objectives in the implementation of relevant obligations of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of

Nuclear Weapons. The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in South-East Asia, the Pacific and Africa is aimed at the same objective.

Romania will continue to contribute to the promotion of the review process of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, both before the next Review Conference in the year 2000, the preparatory committee of which will convene in 1997. We will also give equal attention to the speedy commencement of negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile materials, as well as to the implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and On Their Destruction and the establishment of an efficient verification mechanism.

We again invite all States to consider establishing a code of conduct for conventional arms transfers which will increase transparency and confidence among States in that field.

Romania supports all efforts leading to the total ban of anti-personnel mines. To this end, in 1995, the Romanian Government declared a moratorium, which will be extended this year, and has begun the ratification procedures of the additional Protocols to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons.

My third and last thought relates to the economic and social areas, where we believe there are good prospects for the adoption of the Agenda for Development. Romania endorses the idea that the United Nations can and should contribute to implementing a new global partnership for development among developing countries, developed countries and multilateral institutions. We noted with interest the inclusion of this concept in the economic communiqué adopted at the recent Group of Seven summit meeting in Lyon, as well as the recognition of the fact that the new partnership should be beneficial to all and based on a spirit of solidarity that will distribute responsibility among all partners.

Within this framework, the United Nations and its institutions should pursue reform and adjustment efforts with a view to improving their performance in the building of consensus in the area of development. We welcome the results of the ninth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development in

Midrand as an essential step in its renewal. The session paved the way for the reform of its intergovernmental structure, and the reorientation of its priorities in order to develop cooperation with the World Trade Organization and the Bretton Woods financial institutions. This will lead to the integration of developing countries and countries in transition into the global commercial and financial system.

We also note the measures recently taken to strengthen the Economic and Social Council's central role in establishing and coordinating joint policies, as well as the initiatives of the Economic Commission for Europe and other regional Commissions in redefining their priorities.

The Economic and Social Council has the responsibility to ensure the follow-up to the major international conferences. We will work together in preparing the 1997 special session of the General Assembly in order to improve the implementation of agreements reached on environmental protection at the Rio Conference and at the Vienna regional conference on the review of the Social Summit in Copenhagen. It is worth mentioning that a subregional conference recently held in Bucharest provided a useful evaluation of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action on the status of women in Central and Eastern Europe.

We support the United Nations fight against the abuse of drugs and illicit drug trafficking, including all forms of related crimes. We intend to participate in the preparations of the 1998 special session of the General Assembly devoted to this scourge.

The international community must also be mobilized to confront the rapid rise in transnational organized crime and terrorism. We encourage more active participation on the part of the United Nations. In this respect, we welcome the proposal put forward here last week by President Kwasniewski of Poland.

Development assistance requires a new and better response from the international community in the promotion of our common objective of sustainable and socially equitable growth focused on the human being and on the protection of the environment. Aid flows should be more efficient and directed towards the countries in real need. Romania maintains good cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme and its resident representative in Bucharest, other funds and development programmes — including the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Children's Fund — and with the specialized agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions.

We insure that the assistance we receive is used for structural reforms, and macroeconomic stabilization and that it likewise contributes to the creation of favourable conditions for the expansion of a dynamic and competitive private sector.

Finally, I wish to reaffirm my country's deep commitment to the universal nature of human rights and fundamental freedoms, the promotion and observance of which represent a priority for the United Nations.

In view of this premise, the Romanian Government condemns any form of discrimination and intolerance, especially aggressive nationalism, and intends to guarantee the free and equal exercise of human rights, including the rights of women, children and persons belonging to national minorities. We support the efforts of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, as overall coordinator of the specialized bodies within the United Nations system in improving the efficiency of the Centre for Human Rights.

The best guarantee for the observance of human rights lies in developing democracy. This component of the "democracy-development-peace" triad brings me to a final reflection about the United Nations contribution to the process of worldwide democratization. By convening in Bucharest, in September 1997, the third International Conference on New or Restored Democracies, we wish to continue the dialogue and the sharing of experience in building democratic societies by contributing the experiences of Romania, a country in Central Europe that is reviving, irreversibly, its best democratic traditions after so many years of dictatorship.

I wish to assure the Assembly that my country will do its best, in concert with all interested countries, to enable the United Nations — the guarantor of peace and international legality — to respond more efficiently to the problems we all share.

The President: The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, His Excellency Mr. Somsavat Lengsavad.

Mr. Lengsavad (Lao People's Democratic Republic) (*spoke in Laotian; interpretation from French text furnished by the delegation*): At the outset, I wish to express my pleasure at seeing you, Sir, assume the presidency of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. Your election to this very responsible post attests to the important role of your country, Malaysia, a

country with which the Lao People's Democratic Republic has excellent relations of friendship and cooperation in many areas. Aware of your outstanding competence and your qualities as an experienced diplomat, I am convinced that this session's proceedings will be crowned with brilliant success.

I also wish on this occasion to express my sincere appreciation to Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for the outstanding work he has accomplished during his five years in office in the service of the nations and peoples of the world.

The strengthening of cooperation for development among peoples that we have seen in recent years reflects the general trend throughout the world. In various regions, however, we must sadly note the persistence of complex situations and tensions arising from bloody ethnic conflicts and religious differences.

Even more serious, we are witnessing interference in the internal affairs of States. Hegemonic policies are targeted against small States through arbitrary economic blockades, which constitute new forms of racism and slavery. This threatens and could destroy harmonious coexistence among States and peoples. The entire international community must work even harder to find ways and means to solve these problems as soon as possible. This is no easy task. We must all be patient and resolute. If we work together, keeping equity and justice in our sights as we have done many times, we believe that we can reach our ultimate goals.

In Europe, the Dayton Peace Agreement signed on 14 December 1995 to address the problems of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the recent ensuing elections, marked an important stage in the search for a solution to the distressing and destructive conflict in that country. We appeal to all parties concerned to show maximum restraint and objectivity in their sincere and rigorous implementation of the commitments made, in order to restore peace, stability and cooperation in that region.

In South Africa, under the resolute guidance of President Mandela, the South African people are trying to overcome the aftermath of apartheid and rebuild the beloved country. We pay tribute to the new South African authorities for their determination and courage, and hope that South Africa and its courageous people will enjoy every success in these difficult undertakings.

In the countries of the Caribbean, economic cooperation and cultural and other relations have continued to develop in accordance with the current international climate, thereby enhancing peace and security in that part of the world. Given this logical course of events, we hope that the United States of America will adopt a more reasonable position in its efforts to solve the ongoing problem with the Republic of Cuba through sincere dialogue in order to respond to the legitimate interests of the two peoples and help promote understanding between the two countries.

In the Middle East, following the establishment of the Palestinian Authority in accordance with the Washington peace accord signed in 1993, the peace process was a source of great hope. But recently it has run into difficulties. Events last week in Jerusalem further compound the situation. We are deeply concerned at the situation and the Government of Laos hopes that the coming meeting between leaders of the parties to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will help normalize the situation so that the commitments they made can be respected in the interest of peace and cooperation in the region and throughout the world.

On the Korean peninsula, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States are rightly continuing to implement agreements reached, thereby helping consolidate peace in the region. We welcome this situation, and the Government and the people of Laos express their full support for the deep-seated aspirations of the Korean people for a situation in which a new war becomes impossible and the peaceful reunification of Korea can take place on the basis of dialogue and new, suitable mechanisms that can turn aims into reality.

In South-East Asia, a movement towards peace and cooperation has gathered strength. Recently, in Malaysia, representatives of the countries of the region discussed a planned railroad from Asia to Europe, from Singapore towards China via Laos. This project would enhance cooperation in the region. With this in mind, the countries of the region are trying to work together to solve their problems by peaceful means in accordance with regional realities. By remaining true to their policies of peaceful coexistence and security in the interests of development, these countries, including the Lao People's Democratic Republic, have signed a treaty on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free-zone in South-East Asia. This historic event is their major contribution. The Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic believes that the adoption of the Comprehensive

Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty by the fiftieth session of the General Assembly is a sign of the immeasurable success of efforts made by the international community to bring about the gradual elimination of nuclear weapons throughout the world.

In the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the economic reform that began in 1986 has borne its first fruits for our people. Average annual economic growth over the past five years, from 1991 to 1995, stands at approximately 6.4 per cent. The inflation rate is generally stable, thereby helping gradually to raise the living standards of the multi-ethnic Lao populations. What we have accomplished has helped maintain political stability and social harmony. This was why, during its congress last March, the Lao People's Revolutionary Party gave an exhaustive account of socio-economic development and decided to continue reform unrelentingly on the basis of a market economy. It also decided to aim for average annual national economic growth of 8 to 8.5 per cent and a per capita income of \$500 per year by the year 2000. Currently, our Government is encouraging the various economic sectors to develop and is helping foreigners invest in the potential of the country with a view to laying down material and technical foundations that can help the country say goodbye to underdevelopment by the year 2020. This is a major and arduous task which the Government will work hard to fulfil.

In its foreign relations, the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic intends to continue its policy of peace, independence, friendship and cooperation with all countries and international and non-governmental organizations. For now, it will focus its efforts on preparing the conditions necessary for us to be able to join the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1997. This will enable the country to develop along the general lines of other countries in the region and throughout the world. We are pleased that Cambodia and Myanmar have indicated that they too wish to join ASEAN.

Positive developments are taking place in the international economic situation. Some countries are showing signs of progress. However, there have been no indications that the world economy will make a speedy and lasting recovery. Increased interdependence and globalization in the international economy have both provided new opportunities and caused new tensions and imbalances, and have, in particular, increased the marginalization of developing countries. The entire international community must act together to ensure that

there will be a more favourable and more equitable international economic environment in which developing countries can effectively wage their struggle against poverty in order to achieve progress throughout their societies.

The right to decent housing for all is essential in guaranteeing stability and sound development in the socio-economic sphere. We are therefore pleased to note the accomplishments of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, held in June at Istanbul. The Lao People's Democratic Republic is also pleased to note the positive results achieved at the ninth United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, which took place last May in Midrand, South Africa.

Recently, the World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, held in Stockholm, Sweden, seriously considered the troubling situation in which every year, more than a million children throughout the world are victims of abusers of all sorts, and presented various measures to the international community to combat this new danger which threatens the future of the new generation. The Lao Government supports these efforts and is determined to implement them in every manner possible.

The problem of drug abuse continues to weigh heavily on the international community. Because of its globalization, this problem can be solved only through effective international cooperation founded on the principle of shared responsibility. In recent years, the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic has formulated a comprehensive programme for drug control through the year 2000, which consists in a gradual reduction in poppy cultivation through the implementation of integrated rural development projects. Given the seriousness of drugs in our society, we have recently amended our penal code and laid down more severe sentences for such offenses. We have achieved a certain number of satisfying results in implementing this programme, although a great deal remains to be done. With the cooperation and assistance of friendly countries and international and non-governmental organizations, we hope to be able to make even greater progress in the future, which will contribute to the international community's effort to eradicate this scourge from the face of the Earth.

The environment is one of the issues to which the international community attaches great importance. Developed and developing countries alike have a

sovereign, sacred right to exploit their natural resources. In exercising this fundamental right, sustained, economic growth must go hand in hand with environment protection, and vice versa. Environmental protection should in no way imply a rejection of economic development out of fear of damaging the environment. As the two pillars of lasting development in all countries, these concepts must be mutually reinforcing. It would be unwise, in our view, to emphasize one at the expense of the other. Only equal regard for these two aspects will guarantee the success of any development effort.

We live in a complex and still uncertain world. In this context, nations and peoples throughout the world accord great importance to the United Nations, the only universal multilateral forum for the consideration of world problems. In order to ensure that it can discharge its great duties, the institution needs to adapt itself to new world realities. In this vein, it is essential to affirm the role of the General Assembly, where all States are represented, as the United Nations system's principal organ for deliberation and decision-making. As for the Security Council, the Lao delegation believes that it should be restructured and made more democratic, and that there should be a limited expansion in the number of its permanent and non-permanent members according to equitable geographic distribution and taking into account the relative importance of the various countries. In an effort to achieve this goal, certain countries, such as Japan, Germany and India in particular, should become permanent members of the Security Council. The Security Council would thus be in a position to meet the legitimate aspirations of Member States, and particularly of the developing countries, which constitute the vast majority of nations on our planet. In this vein, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, in cooperation with other delegations, will spare no effort to positively contribute to the current efforts to strengthen our universal Organization.

Address by His Serene Highness Prince Albert, Crown Prince of the Principality of Monaco

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by His Serene Highness Crown Prince Albert, Crown Prince of the Principality of Monaco.

His Serene Highness, Crown Prince Albert, Crown Prince of the Principality of Monaco, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Serene Highness Crown Prince Albert, Crown Prince

of the Principality of Monaco, to the United Nations and in inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Prince Albert (*interpretation from French*): It is a great pleasure for me, at this fifty-first session of the General Assembly, to congratulate you on your election. Your wealth of experience in international affairs, your professional skills and your great diplomatic qualities are, for me and my country, a guarantee that our work will be successful. I would like to include in these very sincere congratulations the other officers of the Assembly, whom we have just elected. I wish them all every success in the important and delicate tasks that lie ahead.

I should also like express our gratitude to and admiration for the President of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly, whose very successful term of office has just come to an end. He did sterling work in ensuring the prestige of the numerous and highly symbolic events that marked the fiftieth anniversary of this Organization. He gave great impetus to the extensive discussions within the General Assembly on strengthening the United Nations system and on the question of equitable representation on the and increase in the membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Council. Suggestions were made by the delegation of Monaco with regard, notably, to the increase in the number of permanent and non-permanent members of the Council. They appear in annex 11 of the report of the working group established to that end.

I should also like to take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General for his efforts to make our Organization less costly and more effective. In a particularly difficult political and economic situation, he has never failed in the mission we entrusted to him five years ago.

I referred just now to the difficulties of our times. These are major difficulties and often seem insurmountable, at least in the short term.

Many factors, sometimes very different but broadly connected, exacerbate these difficulties. The major world conferences on population and development, on social development and on human settlements clearly brought these factors to light.

If the sustainable and harmonious development we aspire to is to apply to all human beings, we must also try to preserve the resources of our planet so that future

generations do not find themselves totally destitute one day. In a vital area for us, the Principality of Monaco has been striving for nearly a century to promote the preservation of oceans and seas and the priceless resources they provide, through studies and research, but also by taking specific national and international initiatives. Accordingly, Monaco ratified the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and intends in 1998 to play an active role, commensurate with our size and resources, during the International Year of the Ocean.

The General Assembly, five years after the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, wisely decided pursuant to resolution 50/113 to hold a special session to consider and review the implementation of Agenda 21. This will be an extremely important session. We hope it will give us an opportunity to reinforce the objectives spelt out at Rio de Janeiro in June 1992.

The Principality of Monaco is pleased to host next year's seventh session of the High-Level Advisory Board on Sustainable Development and then the International Whaling Commission.

My country is thus showing our interest in the international cooperation which is essential if we are to address the confrontation between legitimate economic development and protection of the environment and the non-renewal natural resources of our planet.

Other major concerns which seriously impede development remain. No continent is spared the tensions felt around the world, which pose a serious threat.

Our Organization does not always have the means needed to face up to these challenges and to the most alarming situations. Nevertheless, we welcomed the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which is finally open for signature and which I will have the honour to sign during this session on behalf of the Principality of Monaco.

Mr. Urbizo Panting (Honduras), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Might I refer here to the major role played by the International Atomic Energy Agency which so ably and so carefully monitors compliance with the safeguards agreements concluded in the framework of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which the Principality of Monaco has ratified. Together with this, the Agency very scrupulously seeks to apply, sometimes in

very delicate circumstances, the decisions of the Security Council in this respect. Its responsibilities in the field of disarmament are very substantial. Monaco is therefore particularly proud to be the home of the Marine Environment Laboratory, which functions with the assistance of the United Nations Environment Programme and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission. Furthermore, my delegation has been following very closely the follow-up to resolution 50/75, of which our Principality was one of the sponsors, and which the General Assembly adopted on 12 December 1995.

The strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean is of concern to us, as it is of concern to neighbouring friendly countries on both sides of the Sea. The Secretary-General has embarked on valuable consultations in this respect, and for this we thank him very sincerely.

When wars break out, once the weapons have fallen silent, the painful aftermath remains, including millions of landmines, which have a devastating, extremely deadly effect, scattered in fields and under roads and have a massive impact on civilian populations, primarily on children. At the human level, the proliferation of these devices causes serious, often incurable, mutilation and major material damage. The Security Council's 15 August 1996 discussions on demining in the context of peace-keeping operations highlighted, if there were any need to do so, the importance that the United Nations and the major Powers attach to this question. His Serene Highness, the Sovereign Prince of Monaco, my father, is no less mindful of this. He has requested his Government to provide regular financial assistance to demining operations by contributing to the fund set up by the United Nations for that purpose. Without offering an immediate, complete solution, a moratorium — or, even better, cessation — on the production and export of these anti-personnel landmines would give us some hope.

This year saw the holding of the twenty-sixth Olympic Games. Men and women from 197 countries and territories, from very different backgrounds, came together and tested their strength. They fought peacefully and, with mutual respect and esteem, created imperishable bonds. I was there as Chairman of the Monaco Olympic Committee and as a member of the International Olympic Committee, and I can attest to the unique spirit which every four years brings together the world's best athletes. I wish to pay tribute to them. They are an irreplaceable example for the young people of our nations. I think it is right, here, to echo the appeal made

by many organizations that there be more women representing their countries at the Olympic Games, and that traditions, however worthy of respect, do not become discrimination against women in the area of sport.

The cooperation that has grown up between the United Nations and the Olympic Movement, which share lofty universal principles and values, gives me great hope. Our General Assembly regularly bolsters this cooperation in its resolutions, and I hope that the same will happen this year.

These athletic, dynamic and devoted young people often work as volunteers for the United Nations and non-governmental humanitarian organizations, and they deserve our heartfelt gratitude.

I wish too to recall the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, adopted last year by the General Assembly in resolution 50/81. We must take account of its recommendations in every area, particularly those of education, employment, health, the environment, and ensuring full, effective participation of women in the life of society and in the decision-making process.

The Principality of Monaco, which ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and is a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, is very concerned by contemporary forms of racism and marginalization. We encourage the efforts of the United Nations and the Special Rapporteur on this subject.

We are also seriously alarmed by the development and scale of child prostitution and the trade in young girls and boys. An important initiative was taken last August by a non-governmental organization, End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism, with the assistance of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Government of Sweden.

We must all heed the work of the world Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children. I am sure that the conclusions and recommendations of this Congress, in the form of an agenda for action, will raise our consciousness about the seriousness of the situation by encouraging States to adopt the necessary national and international measures.

By participating in the Congress, Monaco showed its commitment to a world policy to combat the commercial sexual exploitation of children. On the national level, this

is taking the form of unreserved support for humanitarian associations and non-governmental organizations that are active in this area and, in particular for their efforts to sensitize others to this scourge, to prevent it and to rehabilitate its victims. We are also introducing a legislative initiative which should lead to a change in Monaco's penal code before the end of the year, with the introduction a new crime: the sexual exploitation of children for the satisfaction of the vices of others, whether these events occur in the Principality of Monaco or outside our national territory. Once this law is in effect, any person apprehended in Monaco who has committed, in any place whatsoever, acts that can be qualified as crimes or attacks against decency or morality according to the laws of Monaco as regards minors, can be prosecuted and tried.

I would add that the international community must also think about strengthening international legal protections in this area, in so far as existing texts, including the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, particularly its articles 19 and 21, often remain inoperative because they are difficult to apply.

Similarly, the 1926 Slavery Convention, the 1956 Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, and the 1949 Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others, which are very general in scope, do not provide sufficiently effective, speedy recourse in this particular area, where emergency action is necessary.

The strengthening of this protection in the form of a multilateral instrument, for instance, could permit judicial prosecution to go beyond national borders and for the illicit commerce in children and their commercial sexual exploitation to be categorized as crimes against humanity, that is, that they be considered indefensible under the Convention on the Non-applicability of Statutory Limitations to War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity of 26 November 1968. Article 1 of that Convention should thus be modified appropriately. Like those stipulated in the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, these acts should not meet with a refusal to extradite. The law, and international law, should be fully capable of protecting these weak, destitute beings, while leaving no chance of impunity for the perpetrators of these vile crimes.

In addition to strengthening legal protections, we should also give some thought to the steps needed to rehabilitate these young victims, as broadly emphasized

by the Stockholm Congress; without such rehabilitation, that these children would fall back into prostitution circles might prove inevitable.

Although some of the behaviours I have just mentioned are intolerable and unacceptable, I wish now to speak of the United Nations Year for Tolerance, which ended in December 1995. Adopted in December 1993 thanks to a welcome initiative by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, and supported by a unanimous resolution of the General Assembly, this manifestation of faith in humankind, concluded with a Declaration and Plan of Action that were designed to inspire not only high-level politicians, but each of us in our daily lives.

In keeping with General Assembly resolution 49/213, the Follow-Up Plan of Action for the United Nations Year for Tolerance, accompanied by the Declaration of Principles that preceded it and that inspires it (A/51/201), is before this year's session of the General Assembly. It invites us to make a common effort to combat political and social factors which often seem to be at the origin of intolerance and hatred.

This invitation should receive the proper response, for it could contribute to providing solutions to the tensions that persist in the world, some of which, as we know, are extremely disquieting.

Throughout history, the most important moments of progress have certainly occurred during periods of real and profound tolerance. Such tolerance favoured thought, the arts, the sciences, the sharing of knowledge and values. It built civilizations and enabled them to draw together and mutually enrich one another in an exceptional way.

While many today are convinced that history probably has no meaning, it remains none the less a fragile and precious commodity, largely fashioned by the commitments and the will of man.

On 8 January next year we shall commemorate the seven-hundredth anniversary of the establishment of my family's dynasty in Monaco. In celebration of that event, many cultural and artistic events, some on an international scale, will take place throughout 1997. This will be our way of paying a tribute to our past as well as of expressing our confidence and faith in the future and destiny, not only of our country, but of mankind.

On that note, I should like to conclude my statement by thanking the President very much for having allowed me to speak.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank His Serene Highness Crown Prince Albert, Crown Prince of the Principality of Monaco, for the statement he has just made.

His Serene Highness Crown Prince Albert, Crown Prince of the Principality of Monaco, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by His Excellency Mr. Mendsaikhany Enkhsaikhan, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mongolia

The Acting President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mongolia.

Mr. Mendsaikhany Enkhsaikhan, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mongolia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mongolia, Mr. Mendsaikhany Enkhsaikhan, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Enkhsaikhan (Mongolia): At the outset, I wish to extend my sincere congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Razali Ismail of Malaysia on his unanimous election to the high post of the presidency of this session of the General Assembly. I also wish to express my appreciation to His Excellency Mr. Freitas do Amaral for his excellent stewardship of the historic fiftieth session of the General Assembly.

The current session is being held at a time when the contours of a new international system are still being shaped. The twentieth century has witnessed the generation of enormous wealth. However, its distribution among regions, individual States and groups within States remains uneven. Scientific and technological developments have led to great strides in the advancement of human society while they have posed potentially disruptive threats to its survival. Trends towards globalization and integration are accompanied by the forces of fragmentation and marginalization. The winds

of sweeping democratic change have touched the greater part of the family of nations. By and large, the world today finds itself at a momentous juncture, at a time of both opportunities and challenges.

Today no country can afford to stay aloof from the tremendous transformations that are going on. In Mongolia, this year ushered in a new era. As a result of general elections held last summer, State power has been peacefully transferred to democratic political forces for the first time in 75 years. This marks the logical culmination of the 1990 democratic revolution and lays a solid foundation for stable democratic development. It is also a result of the simultaneous pursuit of both political and economic reforms.

The reform process is complex, time-consuming and challenging. Mongolia is not alone in facing the challenges inherent in laying the foundations of an open, democratic, just and humane society and in creating conditions for accelerated social and economic development. Like many other developing countries undergoing fundamental changes, Mongolia is faced with a host of problems: a low level of development, poverty, unemployment, an external debt burden and an underdeveloped national economic structure vulnerable to fluctuations on the world market. In spite of those hardships, the Government of Mongolia is determined to undertake decisive measures to speed up the reform process.

The Government of Mongolia, while preserving the continuity of its multipillared foreign policy, is resolved to pursue an active, balanced foreign policy based on national interests. Mongolia will continue its strong support for the multifaceted activities of the United Nations as one of the main pillars of its foreign policy.

A few days ago the international community witnessed a landmark event designed to attain the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world. I refer to the adoption by the General Assembly of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. This morning I had the privilege of signing the Treaty on behalf of Mongolia. It is of paramount importance, in our view, that all the declared nuclear Powers and threshold States accede to the Treaty so that the many years of hard work that went into it may yield tangible results. With a view to contributing to an effective implementation of this important Treaty, Mongolia will actively participate in its international monitoring system.

We believe that the creation of more nuclear-weapon-free zones in different regions of the world will contribute

to the strengthening of regional and international peace and security. Therefore, we commend and support the Declarations of Africa and South-East Asia as nuclear-weapon-free zones. In 1992, Mongolia declared its territory a nuclear-weapon-free zone, and I am pleased to note here that the nuclear-weapon States, along with other countries, have welcomed and supported our initiative. Mongolia intends to formalize and upgrade the status of the zone to the international level. In a broader context, it is essential to provide assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, in the form of an international instrument.

The advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the illegality of the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, as well as the important recommendations contained in the report of the Canberra Commission, could serve as a sound basis in further negotiations on non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament.

While expressing Mongolia's satisfaction with the Chemical Weapons Convention that will soon come into force, I should like to stress the importance of its ratification by States with substantial arsenals of chemical weapons so that the Convention can be more effective in eliminating this type of weapon of mass destruction.

Turning to regional issues, I should like to underline in particular our deep concern over the uncertain situations in the Balkans and on the Korean peninsula. The recent events in the Middle East are adversely affecting the peace process that is under way. We believe that the parties concerned should exercise utmost restraint and resolve the problems by political negotiation, as envisaged in the Madrid and Oslo agreements.

The peaceful advancement of the human family and its safety can no longer be assured in a world characterized by abject poverty, external debt burdens, a growing technological and economic gap between the rich and the poor, widespread hunger and malnutrition, increasing violence and discrimination, crimes and drug use. It would probably be axiomatic to say that no one can ensure his or her own security at the expense of others. However, merely acknowledging this fact can hardly help solve the problem. There must be real determination and political will, coupled with collective action, to face the challenges ahead.

The recent international conferences on children, the environment, human rights, population, social

development and human settlements organized under the auspices of the United Nations have forged a clear vision and a forward-looking strategy for our common and concerted action toward the betterment of the human condition. Mongolia holds the view that this new framework for international development cooperation should find its due reflection in the Agenda for Development, which would ensure their integrated and comprehensive implementation and follow-up. Vital, in this regard, is a coherent coordination of the policies and activities of the various entities of the United Nations system and those of the Bretton Woods institutions at the global and national levels.

The implementation of the decisions of the aforementioned conferences requires genuine political commitment on the part of the international community and its individual members to substantially increase the resources for sustainable human development. We believe that mobilization of added financial resources can be made possible by reducing global military spending and capturing the resultant peace dividend for human priority needs. Our common and shared future calls for the donor countries that have not yet done so to honour their long-standing commitment to the 0.7 per cent target.

We welcome and support the World Trade Organization as a multilateral forum for defining an international trade policy aimed at coordinating and promoting the interests of countries with different levels of development. Mongolia will join this Organization shortly, which will allow it a greater involvement in world trade and economic integration. Likewise, Mongolia will actively endeavour to secure its proper place in the Asia-Pacific integration, a region characterized by high economic development and overall political stability.

Handicapped by their geographical location, the land-locked developing countries face particular difficulties in their development efforts. Owing to their disadvantaged position, they risk being further isolated and marginalized from the globalization process. In this connection, I wish to emphasize the practical importance of implementing the Global Framework for Transit Transport Cooperation Between Land-locked and Transit-developing Countries and the Donor Community, endorsed by the General Assembly at its last session.

South-South cooperation has become a potential instrument for accelerating the effective integration of developing countries into the global economy. I believe that the conference on finance, trade and investment to be held

in Costa Rica next January will help to further enhance South-South cooperation by identifying its future priorities.

With the acceleration of scientific and technological progress, the question of protecting the environment from mercantile human activities is acquiring an ever-increasing importance. Effective international cooperation aimed at offsetting the adverse effects of industrialization on countries, especially in environmentally sensitive regions; preserving their unique nature and ecosystems; shielding them from natural disasters; and mitigating the damage inflicted is the order of the day. Furthermore, this requires an allocation of additional resources and their effective utilization. Elaboration of a national strategy for sustainable development, in line with the Earth Summit Declaration and Agenda 21, is well under way in my country. Mongolia attaches particular importance to the special session of the General Assembly scheduled for 1997 to review the implementation of Agenda 21. In preparation for that session, a study could be conducted on the root causes of the considerable increase in natural disasters over recent years, as noted in the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization.

Today, it is vital to foster respect for and compliance with the norms of international law. In this regard, Mongolia welcomes the establishment of the International Seabed Authority and supports the creation of an international criminal court. We believe that the international community should elaborate the guiding principles of conducting international negotiations — the main instrument of bilateral and international diplomacy.

Mongolia fully shares the view that the United Nations should be restructured, its activities modified and democratized, and its effectiveness and efficiency improved along the lines of the objectives set forth in the Declaration on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations. I hope that the ongoing deliberations in the high-level Working Groups of the General Assembly will result in the adoption of specific action-oriented recommendations that will make the United Nations better equipped, financed and structured to serve the ideals enshrined in the Charter.

Security Council reform should be intensified through the introduction of greater transparency in its activities and the democratization of its working methods. The expansion of its composition must ensure the fair and equitable representation of various regions and groups of

States as well as its increased effectiveness and efficiency. It goes without saying that, in the final analysis, this world Organization can be only as good as its Member States allow it to be.

Less than four years separate us from the next millennium. The time has come for resolute action. The time has come to collectively undertake radical changes. The time has come to fulfil the dreams of our forefathers to build a better future for our children.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Spanish*):

On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mongolia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mendsaikhan Enkhsaikhan, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mongolia, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Spanish*):

I now call on His Excellency Mr. Destin-Arsène Tsaty-Boungou, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Francophonie of the Congo.

Mr. Tsaty-Boungou (Congo) (*interpretation from French*): The delegation of the Republic of the Congo wishes to express to the President its warmest congratulations on his election to lead the fifty-first session of the General Assembly.

My country is particularly pleased by this choice, as it attests to the international community's recognition of the constant and active commitment of his country to ensuring the triumph of the ideals of peace sought by the United Nations. I have no doubt that under his guidance this session will help humankind take new strides towards peace and progress.

To his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, I would like to express our great appreciation for all he did in spite of the trying international conditions, which were continually complicated by human actions.

Finally, from this rostrum, my delegation wishes to welcome the tremendous efforts of the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali over the past five years. All his work has contributed greatly to the specific efforts of Member States to ensure that our universal institution is better able to meet the many challenges of our times and more likely to avail itself of the many opportunities of the coming century to ensure that humanity will prosper.

The idea of humankind prospering leads me to wonder whether such a phenomenon can become universal at a time when, despite the efforts of the United Nations there are so many differences between nations around the world, so many contradictions and conflicting interests between rich and poor countries and, in Africa in particular, between those who wield political power and those who seek it, frequently using armed force.

However, it must be emphasized that far from being the by-product of a sombre period in the history of humankind, the United Nations remains after more than half a century, the best instrument for achieving and consolidating peace, for the progress of humankind and for preserving diversity around the globe. It also remains a place of legal equality between nations and a crucible of the ideals of humanism in which the interests and the destinies of all continents and all peoples should be fused but not confused.

This being said, the vision of the founding fathers of the United Nations is yet to become a reality. This is possible only if Member States are truly committed to striving for such ideals. Is it Utopian for the increasingly fragile nations to do this when they are trying to find their own equilibrium? Unfortunately, it is very tempting to say yes, as our world is increasingly divided between those who have knowledge and wealth and those who are sinking in ignorance, disease, war and poverty.

In saying this to this Assembly, I, who come from a continent on the brink of oblivion, am not telling anyone anything new. I beg the Assembly's indulgence to repeat the same prayer, the same cry of distress, already voiced here, now and in the past, by our eminent predecessors.

They have said many times, more eloquently than I can, that Africa, 51 years later, is an ailing continent at whose bedside the commonly held notion of international solidarity should be translated into resolutions and quickly followed by actions. The wealthiest countries will then have helped thousands of human beings to join the modern era through scientific and technological progress.

This is a major challenge that calls for foresight, humanism and the mobilization of the richest countries if our world is to be in a better position to deal peacefully with the stakes of the future in the North and the South.

In this connection, the process of the democratization and economic integration of Africa

should be further encouraged and supported by the international community. This is the basis for liberating all the creative African forces that used to be held in check by dictatorial regimes that were not well disposed to fostering intellectual development.

The end of dictatorial regimes in certain African countries and the spread of the democratization process in Africa does not automatically mean the establishment of truly democratic institutions, as the democrats in countries with democratic systems may have wished.

Caught between seeking its future and reconciling the present with its past, Africa must, with universal support, find modern institutional means of curbing the political tension that frequently results from tribalistic or clannish view of power, which in turn results in the civil wars that so hamper the continent in its march towards peace.

Seen in this way, democratic pluralism should be a measure of our march towards progress and, at this stage, make peace the stabilizing and constant factor of democratic institutions. It should also, and above all, ensure that peace is a decisive factor in human development in Africa.

Our continent can no longer take democracy to mean the mechanical imposition of some model of democratic institutions while forgetting our historical baggage or giving in to the temptation to undo with the stroke of a pen the bases of our social and cultural values.

It was by seeking a true balance between peace and democratic institutions that the President of the Republic of the Congo was able to restore peace in our country after two years of civil war, following the democratic elections that brought him to power. By this same philosophy, having integrated members of the major opposing political party into the Government of the Republic, Mr. Pascal Lissouba supports the idea of a necessary period of democratic transition. This period is one of adapting the various political actors to the needs of the democratic regime, particularly to the principle of political change-over with the preservation of our values based upon sharing, solidarity and respect for authority.

We are convinced that an approach based on the concept of participatory democracy will make it possible to reduce the sources of conflict between those who have been elected by the people and those who have lost in democratic elections without affecting in the least the rules of the democratic regime, particularly the principles of

equality, liberty and the right of the people to choose their main leaders.

We think that African democracy, freed from the dangers of political individualism, the temptations of power for oneself and the torments of tribalism, even with the legacy of political systems of the past, can become a factor for pacification, a fairer distribution of the fruits of collective efforts and social and economic progress.

In this vision, the present weakness of our political systems can be regarded as a phase in the democratic transition to a modern developed Africa only if the international community fully realizes that democracy cannot prosper in poor countries, where politics were for so long the road to social success, without exposing our citizens to the political games of those for whom the advent of democracy and its attendant competitive elections mean the end of the eminent position they enjoy in society thanks to the exercise of political power. The various civil wars that repeatedly cast a shadow over our continent are sad testimony to this reality.

Therefore, assistance to promote economic development in African countries that are committed to the democratization of their institutions will result in the emergence of new political classes that are protected from need and that will be more likely to regard politics as a means of governing a community of men and women who are bound by a territory and a common destiny than as the only means to get ahead in an economically poor environment.

As the Assembly can imagine, the economic development of Africa is a decisive factor for stability, development, pacification and democratization. The current world economic situation is clear evidence that globalization is inevitable. However, globalization could also have serious drawbacks if measures are not adopted to rectify fundamental imbalances. Increased competition means poor countries, particularly those in the sub-Saharan region, will risk losing more market shares and will be increasingly marginalized.

If it is first and foremost up to the African countries to demonstrate that their marginalization is determined only by fate and that their current situation is merely one of those tragic aftermaths with which history has frequently sprinkled the course of human events, then it is also up to the international community as a whole, in active solidarity, to make a special commitment to

supporting the efforts of the African countries to deal with the challenges before them.

This is why I must emphasize the role of international cooperation and, particularly, the importance of official development assistance for our countries. This assistance, important in principle, should be enhanced with action, in accordance with commitments that were entered into, in order to meet the needs of the poorest populations and to make Governments better able to meet their obligations. Unfortunately, the decrease in such aid runs counter to this view.

My country is pleased to note the Secretary-General's Special Initiative to help Africa, which reinforces the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s. The mid-term review falls far short of our expectations, however. The Congo supports the recommendations emerging from that assessment and hopes that the international community will do its utmost to respect its commitments towards Africa.

Earlier I mentioned the tragedies of the African peoples caused by civil war. My country, the Congo, which since March 1995 has presided over the Standing Advisory Committee of the United Nations on Security Questions in Central Africa, would like to say how pleased it is to note that in Angola, as well as in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the parties are endeavouring to implement the peace agreements and are thus enjoying the support of the international community. We must welcome the efforts of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to settle the Liberian conflict, and we are pleased to note the signing of the new peace Agreement, which, in the light of current political developments in that country, gives us reasons for hope.

However, we are deeply concerned by the situation in some other parts of the world. The recent, spiralling acts of violence in the Middle East and the number of civilian casualties have weighed heavily on the peace process. The Republic of the Congo emphasizes the importance of an early resumption of dialogue, with a view to continuing the peace process in the Middle East.

The Republic of the Congo welcomes progress in nuclear disarmament, particularly the opening for signature last 24 September of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). This historic act strengthens the extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and will promote international relations based upon peaceful coexistence and trust between States. This is the

course of action chosen by African countries in the Pelindaba Treaty, which makes Africa a nuclear-free zone.

We must express our deep concern over the situations in Africa in which peace is threatened daily, both within national borders and between States. By establishing the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, the General Assembly has established a cooperative framework that will enable 11 States from Central Africa to engage in dialogue in order to build confidence among themselves and establish their own machinery to facilitate the prevention, management and settlement of conflicts in the subregion. The first summit of the Heads of State and Government, held on 8 July 1996 in Yaoundé, Cameroon, led to the signing of a non-aggression pact.

We want to express our sincere thanks to the countries, particularly Japan, that have contributed to the special trust fund to implement the Committee's programme. That fund made it possible to hold in Yaoundé, under the auspices of the United Nations, a seminar for training specialized units of peace operations.

I would also like to express the Committee's thanks to President Julius Nyerere for his role in finding a peaceful solution to the Burundi crisis. The Government of the Congo calls upon all parties to the conflict in Burundi, a fraternal country and a member of the Advisory Committee, to regain control of the situation and to create through dialogue conditions for a return to peace and national reconciliation.

Before concluding, I would like to mention some recent developments in the economic and political situation in my country. Since the National Forum for the Culture of Peace organized with the support of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Brazzaville in December 1995 and the signing of a peace pact among the various political parties, we are more than ever determined to address the most crucial issues before our country, namely, consolidating peace and combating poverty.

At the initiative of His Excellency President Pascal Lissouba, all the Congolese political forces have signed a framework agreement on census-taking with a view to prepare the second presidential election of our democratic era. The recently appointed Government is endeavouring to organize these elections in transparency, peace and respect for deadlines. In order to meet its commitments

the Government of Congo will be able to count on the United Nations, friendly countries and all those who promote the consolidation of democracy in Africa.

The signing on 20 June of a strengthened structural adjustment mechanism with the International Monetary Fund ensures that our people will support an economic and social recovery programme despite the many sacrifices it will entail. These efforts will be pursued with the same commitment in the hope that our country will receive the support of the international community at the round table of donor countries to be held at Geneva in November.

Congo, freed from the burdens that have delayed its development for so long and mortgaged its future, will finally be able to offer its people the peace and progress for which they have been waiting so long.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Lebanon, His Excellency Mr. Fares Bouez.

Mr. Bouez (Lebanon) (*interpretation from Arabic*): At the outset, allow me to congratulate Ambassador Razali on his election as President of this session of the General Assembly and to wish him success in his noble task of enhancing and strengthening the role of the United Nations. I would also like to express our thanks and appreciation to the former President of the General Assembly, Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, for his efforts during his presidency.

Half a century has elapsed since the birth of the United Nations. Mankind wanted the United Nations to be a bastion of justice, peace and human rights. It is meant to be an authority where problems are solved and truth upheld, where mankind can find an organization to defend its rights when they are usurped and stand by its side when it is threatened. In founding the United Nations, mankind wanted to put an end to wars and usher in an era of peace, of respect for the principle of State sovereignty and of safeguarding peoples' independence and their right to self-determination and to the fulfilment of their aspirations.

With the telecommunications revolution and the fall of political, economic, demographic, cultural and security boundaries and barriers, States and their peoples need an effective machinery for consultation and constructive dialogue. The scientific and technological revolution has increased our need for a greater synergy to face the complex problems of our time and to bridge the gap between the countries and nations of the world so as to

enable them to implement jointly subregional and interregional projects that none can do alone.

The world population explosion and the concomitant ecological degradation have made the environment incapable of meeting rising demand. Competition for natural resources and for the protection of vital interests have risen sharply.

The increased number and growing sophistication of lethal nuclear, chemical and bacteriological weapons of mass destruction and the further development of their intercontinental delivery systems heightens the threat of annihilation for many countries and peoples, especially when some of the countries which possess them lack even minimal credibility.

Some societies are overwhelmed by the degree of sophistication of the media, by its role and by the speed with which political, economic, social, cultural and scientific news flows through it. These societies may not be ready to assimilate and absorb this flow of information, so they react by isolating themselves, by withdrawing into seclusion, or by hiding behind the veil of tradition to protect their identity. This manifests itself in the extremism and fundamentalism these societies use to shield themselves from what is often perceived as a threat to their identity.

These and other problems and challenges require invigorating the United Nations machinery and renewing confidence in its credibility, justice and efficiency, to free its decisions from hegemony, eliminate its imbalances and bring consistency to the standards it uses for the implementation of its resolutions. We must do this if we want the United Nations to remain a valuable global authority and the alternative to destructive and violent confrontation.

The world has witnessed a succession of local and regional crises. Lebanon, which has suffered immensely, plagued by the wars of others on its soil, follows with concern the developments in different parts of the world.

The crisis over the sovereignty of the United Arab Emirates on the Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa islands has not yet been settled. We hope referring the case to the International Court of Justice will result in a settlement reaffirming the United Arab Emirates claim of sovereignty.

We also support arbitration of the case of the Greater and Lesser Hanish islands between Yemen and Eritrea; both parties have agreed to such arbitration.

Support for the unity, security and stability of Liberia and Angola remains a primary objective to put an end to the suffering of their peoples.

Lebanon likewise supports the Republic of Cyprus in its efforts to build unity and sovereignty over all its territory to put an end to the suffering of its people and to the effects of the problem on the Government of Cyprus with respect to the reunification of the island.

Lebanon has been following with grave concern the recent deterioration of the situation in Iraq and the suffering of the Iraqi people, who still lack food and other basic needs. We do not believe that the recent events represent the best way to address the Iraqi problem. We call rather for the implementation of Security Council resolution 986 (1995), and for a commitment to the unity and sovereignty of Iraq, which would guarantee the inviolability of the geopolitical map of the Middle East. If a breach were to be opened in Iraq, the consequences would definitely extend to other extremely sensitive regions, which would further complicate the situation. Our support of the sovereignty of the State of Kuwait over all its territory prompts us to appeal for a permanent guarantee of its sovereignty and security so that we can turn the page on this bitter chapter of history once and for all.

The credibility enjoyed by international law is based on its ability to find just and complete solutions to important questions. This is the mission of the United Nations and it therefore should be spared from having to intervene in less important crises.

The credibility of the United Nations is still called into question and this, in turn, undermines the role of the Organization in the field of the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) has been extended despite the reservations expressed by some States, including Lebanon, on the circumstances of its extension, including Israel's refusal to become a party to it. Israel is allowed to maintain a formidable nuclear arsenal in one of the most sensitive and volatile regions of the world without any safeguards or controls; this poses a threat to all the peoples of the region. The cessation of nuclear testing has been presented as an alternative to the NPT. Despite the many promises made prior to the extension of the NPT that Israel would ultimately accede to it, this has yet to happen. Using

double standards in dealing with States can only create imbalances, which in turn increases the number of exceptions to the rule. The effectiveness of the Organization depends on the equal treatment of all States, and the United Nations remains the means to implement such policies.

In this context, Lebanon enthusiastically supports enhancing the functioning and management of the Organization in all areas, particularly with regard to the scope of representation of the world's peoples and the countries in the Security Council. Recent changes and new requirements demand more realistic geographic and numerical representation in that body. We need to eliminate the perception of hegemony that some have developed about the role and decision-making power of the Council, which they seem to believe has been seized by certain major Powers. Lebanon believes that all proposals in this regard must be carefully studied, particularly those that are compatible with the approach I have outlined and that enjoy broad support among States. I am thinking in particular of the proposals of the non-aligned countries and of Italy.

In recent years, and despite the many difficult circumstances that have accompanied his years in office, the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, has made commendable efforts to further global peace, security and stability. He has worked to solve problems of social and economic development as well as those of health in many parts of the world. Furthermore, he has undertaken numerous reforms within the Organization. His term has been distinguished by dynamism towards the achievement of the Organization's primary goals. Despite the obstacles, his accomplishments are many and the world bears witness to them. This continued course, as seen in a renewed mandate, would be a basic guarantee of the stability of United Nations policies. Lebanon believes that the renewal of the Secretary-General's mandate would make it possible to complete many projects and measures undertaken during his first term. We therefore call upon States to support his bid for a renewed, strengthened mandate.

We would have very much liked our participation in this session, several years following the Madrid conference, to be an occasion for gratitude for the restoration of peace in the Middle East. We had hoped to express our gratitude to the countries, peoples and organizations which have tried to bring about this peace. Five years have passed since the Madrid peace conference, not counting the preparatory year. At the

time, we welcomed the initiative and believed in the sponsorship and the subject matter of the conference. The sponsors were two influential Powers, and the substance was geared towards the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace on the basis of the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), and with regard to Lebanon, Security Council resolution 425 (1978), as well as the principle of land for peace. We accepted the invitation and thought that the others who accepted it had also agreed to its substance, and that the only pending issues would be implementation, scheduling and mechanisms.

But years have passed, and instead of moving forward towards implementation, Israel has reneged on its commitments and has tried to move away from what was already done. As soon as the new Israeli Government was in power, it adopted its manifesto: "The four No's" — no to the withdrawal from the occupied Syrian Golan; no to the withdrawal from the occupied West Bank; no to the settlement of the question of Jerusalem; and no to recognition of the national rights of the Palestinian people in a State of their own.

To the contrary, the principle of land for peace has been replaced by the principle of peace for security, meaning refraining from waging a new war. Instead of fulfilling commitments, formulas must be changed. Instead of Madrid, there is the unknown. Instead of putting an end to settlements, settlements are being expanded. A tunnel is now being built under the Al-Aqsa Mosque, in a clear act of provocation to the people's sensitivities.

We were asked to shake hands, to offer recognition and to normalize relations without knowing what will happen to our rights. We, the victims of aggression, are asked to give security guarantees to the aggressor. Those who do not possess weapons are asked to give assurances to those who have one of the largest nuclear arsenals in the world and who could not be convinced to accede to the NPT when other countries have been forced to accept its indefinite extension.

Since the new Israeli Government came to power, it has backed away from the peace process, although occasional misleading steps are made. The new Government of Israel has resorted to a meaningless media campaign to disguise its rejection of peace. We first heard the "Lebanon first" slogan, but this too was void of any meaning except as an attempt at isolation and to serve the purposes of the media campaign. We then heard of the meeting between the Palestinian and Israeli presidents.

Once again, the occasion was exploited, but meaning remained absent.

It has become clear that the objective of the Israeli Government was to numb world public opinion and undo what was agreed upon at the peace conference and the ensuing negotiations. It is perfectly clear that Israel does not have a policy for peace. It only has a policy of changing formulas, a policy of threats and challenges, a policy that Israel can use to further its expansionist and settlement schemes.

Just as the world was on the verge of believing that peace had become possible in the Middle East region, here we are facing the unknown, facing the worst.

Some States in the region wanted to precipitate the earlier optimism by moving to normalize relations. Now they bear the burden of Israeli logic. Now the peoples of the region have been thrust back into an era of inevitable confrontation, violence, and resistance. No sooner had the development plans of the Middle East region been put into place and the world was showing interest in a future of peace than mistrust and pessimism returned to prevail. No sooner had the historic opportunity for the realization of a great dream begun to crystallize than this opportunity started to fade, leaving the peoples of the region with only one alternative — to confront occupation, arbitrary rule and obstinacy — since all international peace efforts are failing. Today's violence in Palestine and in southern Lebanon is a direct result of the negative positions of the Israeli Government. It presages dire consequences should the peace process collapse.

Since the Madrid Conference, the United States has tried, through two successive presidencies, to push the peace process forward towards settlement. In order to do so, the United States requested that the peace process be taken out of the context of the United Nations and the Security Council and be confined to the mechanisms defined at Madrid. The United States sought to reassure Israel by all military, material and economic means available, even to the detriment of the Arabs, with the idea of reviving the confidence of the Israelis. Then the United States imposed concepts to increase guarantees given to Israel to consolidate the peace process, which were provisionally accepted, despite the fact that they were unsound. Today, these efforts are threatened by the party that benefited from them in the first place.

Today, the President of the United States will try to bring together the parties concerned, pursuing his responsibility to salvage the peace. Israel will continue to manoeuvre, and will exploit the occasion provided by United States presidential elections to undermine the steps that were already in place. They will foil the efforts of the United States, which we supported even though these called for a continued and somewhat iniquitous tolerance of Israel, despite the fact that Israel's excesses had always been covered by assurances for the sake of peace.

We must return to the foundations of peace as announced at Madrid, resume the negotiations from where they were interrupted and realize that the opportunity for peace which had started to crystallize still presents a historic opportunity. It must be recognized that what was achieved at Madrid is the only foundation acceptable to the people of the region. If peace is ever to be salvaged in the Middle East, this is the only way to achieve it.

Lebanon has for many years suffered the aftermath and consequences of the Middle East crisis and has paid a heavy toll. Today, through domestic political measures, security, development and economic achievements, Lebanon is once again proving that it can confront difficulties and face challenges. Lebanon is showing that its national unity, the restoration of full sovereignty over its territory and respect for its independence are inevitably more solidly inherent in its existence than some might believe.

In the future, if peace is safeguarded, Lebanon will prove that its history is larger than its geographical borders and that its role by far exceeds its size. When Lebanon regains its sovereignty over all of its territories now under Israeli occupation, when the United Nations has restored its credibility by implementing Security Council resolution 425 (1978) on an equal footing with resolutions relating to other parts of the world, when Lebanese citizens are released from Israeli detention camps where they are imprisoned with only minimal human rights, then and only then will the bleeding stop and the wound heal.

The Middle East is tired of being an active volcano threatening world peace. We have for too long been robbed of peace to the detriment of the entire world. Opportunities will not forever remain for those seeking peace. The peace which we sought and for which we have long appealed is threatened today. The failure of our endeavours to achieve peace will close the door to any new attempt in the foreseeable future. If reviving peace is a difficult job, the

ramifications of failure will be even more difficult for the whole world.

The days when problems were confined to national boundaries are well over, and so are the days when boundaries were walls keeping crises contained. We hope that peace is still possible. But it must be a just peace, not a despoiling one; a real peace, not a theatrical one; an equitable peace not an iniquitous one. It must be a peace that calms rather than one that fans the anger of peoples.

May God forever guide the steps of those who seek and work for peace, and inspire those who still oppose it.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Spanish*):
The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Oman, His Excellency Mr. Yousef Bin Al-Alawi Bin Abdulla.

Mr. Abdulla (Oman) (*interpretation from Arabic*):
At the outset and on behalf of my delegation, allow me to congratulate Ambassador Razali on his election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session. Oman has long enjoyed close friendly relations with his country, Malaysia, and we are confident that given his leadership and vast diplomatic experience our deliberations will reach a meaningful and successful conclusion, to which end we shall cooperate in every way.

I would like to take this opportunity to pay special tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, the representative of the fraternal country of Portugal, for the exemplary manner in which he steered the work of the previous session.

We also wish to convey our sincere thanks and appreciation for the unwavering support of the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali. He has enhanced and reinvigorated the role of the United Nations in all areas of interest, in spite of the problems and obstacles faced by the international Organization as a result of its recent financial crisis.

Our celebration last year of the fiftieth anniversary, the Nations golden jubilee, offered us a unique opportunity to review and contemplate the tremendous and substantial achievements of this body over the past five decades, during which this international Organization has made vigorous efforts to save the international community from the scourge of war and to alleviate the

sufferings of vulnerable peoples throughout the world. We are fully confident of the United Nations capability to discharge the responsibilities entrusted to it in future by the international community.

Although the world widely considers the Middle East to be a region of great significance, a comprehensive peace has not yet been achieved there. The international community witnessed an important breakthrough with the convening of the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference aimed at reaching a comprehensive and peaceful solution to this issue. Since then, concerted and positive steps have been taken to achieve that long-awaited objective, such as the signing of many agreements and conventions between the main parties to the conflict, particularly on the Palestinian-Israeli and Jordanian-Israeli tracks. Such steps have made the peace process in the Middle East more deep-rooted and irrevocable.

All these attempts have been made through the courageous and strenuous efforts of the concerned parties in the Middle East, with the help of international support and assistance. My country's contribution has included support and encouragement of these steps through its contacts with the concerned parties at the bilateral and multilateral levels of the peace negotiations, notably the agreement to establish commercial ties with Israel and other accords with the Palestinian Authority, as well as the agreement reached by the group of founder countries to establish a Middle East research centre for water desalination.

Because of the procrastination and hesitation of the newly elected Government of Israel fully to implement all previous agreements, the peace process in the Middle East requires, now more than ever before, the support of the international community.

The peace process in the Middle East is a mutual responsibility of and full partnership between the Arab countries and Israel. In a partnership, every party must reap the fruits of peace or bear the risks and losses. Proceeding from this understanding, all parties must be treated on an equal footing. Furthermore, my country sees no justification for Israel's continued blockading of the Palestinian cities, both from the humanitarian point of view and because it undermines all relations between the Palestinian people and their Israeli counterparts, as was recently seen in the bloody confrontations that occurred in Al-Quds following the opening of a tunnel by the Israeli Government at an Islamic holy site. Moreover, the expansion of hostilities at the expense of the peace

negotiations will serve no one but the enemies of peace and the supporters of confrontation and animosity.

Given such unacceptable measures, my country's efforts to promote the principles of confidence-building and mutual cooperation in this area will be hampered and delayed. We call upon the Government of Israel to close the tunnel. At the same time, we hope that the summit to be hosted today by President Clinton in Washington will be successful.

My country calls upon Israel to assume its primary responsibility for revitalizing the peace process by resuming the peace negotiations and taking credible steps towards the tangible and practical implementation of all agreements reached in this regard. It also hopes that the progress achieved at the Madrid Peace Conference will have a positive impact on all tracks, including the Syrian-Israeli and Lebanese-Israeli tracks. We believe that it is high time for the concerned parties to capitalize on the lessons of the past and work together in order to restore the momentum of peace and achieve a comprehensive settlement of this issue. In order to preserve the momentum of the peace process, my country will stand ready to extend every possible assistance and to take positive steps to enhance the peace process in the Middle East.

My country expresses its satisfaction with the situation in Iraq in the aftermath of the recent events and developments in the north of the country, which raised tensions and nearly destabilized the region again. We call upon all concerned parties to abide by international law and to focus on the implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions on Iraq, as well as to resume and activate the negotiations between the conflicting parties, in order to maintain the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq.

On the other hand, we welcome the memorandum of understanding signed between Iraq and the United Nations, allowing Iraq to implement resolution 986 (1995). In our view, if implemented, that resolution will help alleviate the suffering of the brotherly people of Iraq. While drawing the international community's attention to the irrelevant linkage between the implementation of the aforementioned resolution and recent events in northern Iraq, and to the humanitarian appeals inside the country, we call on Iraq to cooperate fully with the United Nations in a manner that guarantees the effective and swift implementation of this resolution. Iraq is also requested to cooperate with the United

Nations in implementing other international resolutions on the release of Kuwaiti detainees and properties and the nationals of other countries detained in Iraq, in the hope that Iraq's full compliance and further cooperation with the United Nations Special Commission on Iraq will pave the way for the possible lifting of the international embargo and the restoration of peace and stability in the region.

With regard to the question of disarmament, the United Nations has played an important role in diffusing the threat of weapons of mass destruction and promoting an equitable balance between the regional Powers. My country has participated in the Commission on Disarmament's meetings on regional security as part of an international effort to reactivate peace negotiations in the Middle East. While actively supporting the Commission, the Sultanate of Oman would point out that such efforts alone cannot guarantee equitable security in the region if they are not paired with other effective and practical measures to eliminate weapons of mass destruction there and to promote comprehensive and unconditional acceptance of international monitoring and inspection of all activities related to this matter.

The Sultanate of Oman was also among the first countries to sign the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction and the first country in the Middle East to ratify it. This is a clear indication of my country's distinctive role in enhancing security and stability in the region and throughout the world. Similarly, it is a great honour for me to announce to this international forum the Sultanate's decision to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), in the hope that other countries that have not yet done so will follow the same course before the end of the year so as to ensure the Treaty's universality and to secure a world free of all weapons of mass destruction in which all mankind can live in peace, love and prosperity. My country, like many others, voted in favour of this Treaty and, while we salute all who contributed to this major achievement, we call on the United Nations not to stop here, but to continue its efforts to free the world once and for all from all nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction. We call upon the nuclear-weapon States in particular to implement time-bound programmes in order to achieve this noble objective as soon as possible.

We would like to express our deep concern and regret *vis-à-vis* terrorist acts that target the lives of innocent people — including children, women and the elderly — and violate their legitimate right to live in peace and prosperity.

The international community should take immediate and collective action to combat this phenomenon. We support all sincere and faithful efforts to convene an international conference to address and eliminate this problem and related aspects and to ensure that the perpetrators of such terrorist acts do not go unprosecuted and are brought to justice.

The Dayton Agreement for Bosnia and Herzegovina, signed a year ago, has proved to be the optimal solution for putting an end to that tragic four-year war, which killed, wounded or displaced many Bosnians. My country welcomes this historic Agreement and made every possible effort as a Security Council member and at regional and international forums to put an end to the suffering of the Bosnian people and the atrocities committed against them and to restore security, stability and prosperity to all the peoples of the Balkans. We hope that the results of the elections held recently in Bosnia will pave the way for a better and prosperous future in which the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina can live in peace, tranquillity and cooperation.

Effective participation in international and regional conferences on environmental issues is one of the ways in which the Sultanate of Oman is helping to improve and coordinate its environmental policies. My country has played an active role in many of these conferences and has hosted some as a contribution to increasing public awareness at the national, regional and international levels. We are fully convinced that, through concerted efforts, the international community can preserve the environment and the world's ecosystems. We emphasize the need for all countries to participate effectively in the international agreements and conventions aimed at conserving the ecological system, preventing environmental degradation, enhancing international scientific exchange and creating an international information network.

In Oman, we focus consistently on the development of human resources, the improvement of our technical and vocational education, the encouragement of the private sector and economic diversification. Our fifth development plan, initiated at the beginning of this year, has several objectives, including the improvement of technical and vocational education in Oman, the encouragement of the private sector and economic diversification and the establishment of an economic balance conducive to foreign investment. We have also updated our tax systems in accordance with an equation that would establish a level playing field for foreign

investments. A financial centre has recently been established in Muscat to deal with the activities of foreign trade and investments in Oman. The commercial and regional economic groups have had a major impact on international efforts to expand the range of mutual economic interests and influence the free flow of trade and investment throughout the world. In this context, my country has participated with its sister countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in exploring every possible means to promote and expand free trade and investment among these countries or between any other international groups.

My country has also participated actively in founding a new economic group of the littoral States of the Indian Ocean, including several African countries, to trigger commercial activity among these countries, develop economic cooperation and maximize opportunities for the present and future investment and exploitation of their natural and human resources in the best interests of their peoples. We are confident that the establishment of such a new economic group, which embraces many countries with deep-rooted historic and cultural ties, will ultimately enhance cooperation between its member States and affect other economic factors, such as raw materials, human resources and energy.

Here I would like to talk about Africa. A number of African countries are still suffering from the aftermath of the cold war, which resulted in internal political turmoil and crisis, leading to a decline in gross national products. Africa's role is indispensable. We have to help it assume its natural place on the international scene. We therefore call upon the United Nations and the international community to continue to extend assistance to Africa through further cooperation with all its regional organizations.

Technological progress has greatly speeded communications between countries and economic advancement. My country welcomes the outcome of the summit of industrial countries held last June in Lyon, France, at which these countries reaffirmed their solidarity with the international community's efforts to solve the problems and reduce the burdens associated with globalization. Similarly, the developing countries should benefit from the outcome of the Uruguay Round.

The developing countries are pushing to adopt market-economy policies and undertaking further structural economic reforms in support of free trade and investment. They are also looking forward to the capital flows and

technology transfers that can help strengthen their economic and social development, improve the quality of their productivity and upgrade their services. This in turn will enable these countries to increase their development, widen their markets and enhance the international competitiveness of developing countries, creating a more independent world in which stability and prosperity will prevail.

My Government has already requested full membership in the World Trade Organization (WTO). We have been following its work for a year now. Our accession to WTO membership would be a big step for us. It would enhance our development, promote our services and upgrade our productivity standards to the fullest level possible. To that end, we must guarantee a reasonable balance between our national interests and regional and international benefits. In this context, the Sultanate of Oman, as a developing country, has been looking forward to receiving the global support and assistance which, under the generalized system of preferences, the international community extends to developing countries to help them address the challenges posed by economic reforms and structural adjustment. In both the short and long terms, the international community should continue to enhance this system.

As can be seen in its national legislation and norms, such as the national law of commercial signs and the patenting system which governs new inventions within the countries of the GCC, Oman has played a commendable role in protecting intellectual property. Furthermore, a law to protect copyrights and publications has been enacted in the general context of updating and improving the legislation and norms of trade and investment in Oman. Given Oman's support of the principles embodied in the new global trend to protect intellectual property rights and its desire fully to participate and cooperate in this regard, my Government has decided to accede to the World Intellectual Property Organization.

As we approach the twenty-first century, we are prompted by hope to continue to work and cooperate collectively in maintaining international peace and security to enhance life for the current and future generations. Such an objective cannot be achieved without the firm commitment of the international community to reviewing and adopting clear economic guidelines for an urgent and serious approach to the establishment of a permanent, effective economic mechanism to deal with this matter for the benefit of all of mankind. The United Nations should assume the

primary responsibility of addressing these great challenges and discharge in an effective manner the global duties entrusted to it by the international community.

We appreciate the complexity of the task of reforming the United Nations and its organs, but we also believe that it can be accomplished through the establishment of dynamic and cost-effective mechanisms for achieving selected goals and meeting the urgent needs of future development plans.

We support the Secretary-General's medium-term proposals for an objective strategy for the programmes of the future work of the United Nations. In this connection, we express our concern regarding the deterioration of the financial situation of the United Nations. We urge Member States to fulfil their financial obligations and thus enable the United Nations to carry out its functions effectively. We would also emphasize the responsibility of the Security Council — its permanent members in particular — to their financial commitments to peacekeeping operations, in coordination with the various regional and international bodies of the United Nations, which collectively endeavour to secure appropriate solutions to international conflicts. We call on the international community to accelerate its efforts to review and reform the administrative organs of the United Nations in a manner that conforms to the global aspirations and expectations of the forthcoming century.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Burundi, His Excellency Mr. Luc Rukingama.

Mr. Rukingama (Burundi) (*interpretation from French*): The Burundi delegation, which I have the honour of leading at the current session of this General Assembly, would like to begin by taking this opportunity to present the friendly greetings of the Government and people of Burundi.

Burundi attaches overwhelming importance to the noble ideals of justice, peace and security which the United Nations has defended and pursued. This is why, even during the acute crisis that has rocked our country these past three years, we have always tried to participate as actively as possible in these proceedings. We offer well-deserved thanks for the Organization's tireless efforts to put an end to the fratricidal war we have been experiencing since 21 October 1993.

Our delegation welcomes the fitting choice of a worthy son of Malaysia to act as President of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly of our Organization. We are convinced that his intellectual and moral qualities, together with his thorough knowledge of the concerns of the world today, are undeniable assets in ensuring the success of our work.

He can count on the full support and readiness of my country, which has a Vice-President on the Bureau, and we will make our modest contribution to ensuring the success of the work of the President.

We also wish to pay tribute to his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral of Portugal, for the competence and clear-sightedness with which he conducted the proceedings of the previous session, when the United Nations was commemorating its fiftieth anniversary.

Finally, we wish to express our appreciation for the role that His Excellency Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Secretary-General of the United Nations, has played throughout the world during his term of office to promote peace, cooperation and development. We particularly remember the important appeal for peace and national reconciliation he addressed to the people of Burundi and Africa during his visit to Bujumbura in July 1995.

Despite the crisis in my country, we believe that this message will finally be heeded by those who opted for violence to satisfy their ambitions.

As members know, the fifty-first session of the General Assembly is taking place at a time when my country, Burundi, is suffering the deepest crisis of its history. The end of the cold war certainly made it possible for the international community to free itself from the ideological shackles and other constraints imposed on it by East-West antagonisms. The United Nations has thus been able to focus on its fundamental objectives and effectively respond to some of the problems the rivalry between super-Powers had long made it impossible to solve.

However, we cannot but note, not without bitterness, that in the post-cold-war period, new, more complex conflicts have broken out, mostly within countries, that have caused serious humanitarian problems. That, unfortunately, is the case in my country. For three years, Burundi has been in the grip of widespread massacres and acts of genocide.

Since October 1993, Burundi has been increasingly mired in a tragedy from which it seems unable to escape. The consensus Government established in October 1994 in the context of implementation of the Convention on Governance of 10 September 1994, after lengthy negotiations among political parties, has been characterized by suspicion and a lack of trust at the highest echelons of State and a serious lack of will to restore peace.

The complicity of the previous administration with armed groups, massive human rights violations, duplicity at the top of the State administration and the absence of leadership have led to denunciation of the Convention on Governance and a breakdown in institutions. With a view to avoiding implosion in the face of the threat of renewed genocide, and lacking a credible alternative, the active forces of the nation requested His Excellency President Buyoya to take on the burden of responsibility of putting Burundi back on track.

The new administration has decided that its priority is to put an end to massacres and slaughter, to restore peace and security for all, to end impunity, to reintegrate displaced persons and reconstruct the country.

The government of public salvation was inaugurated on 2 August 1996. This is a broad-based team that reflects the various ethnic components and political trends. All regions of the country have been represented.

The Government wants to promote solidarity and unity to ensure the success of its transitional programme, which will last three years. Its plan of action was made public recently by the Prime Minister, His Excellency Mr. Pascal Firmin Ndimira. Its aim is to make good the commitment entered into by the Head of State to bring Burundi back to the path of peace, security and prosperity by means of dialogue and national debate.

The changes in Burundi since 25 July 1996 have been welcomed by the population of Burundi as a rescue operation. The messages of support from all quarters and the spontaneous demonstrations throughout the country were visible signs of the support of the people of Burundi for the new administration, which has come to the assistance of a country that was on the brink.

However, some countries, particularly our neighbours, were slow to realize the need, if we were to avoid genocide in Burundi and maintain the sovereignty of the country, to establish an administration that would bring

people together in the quest for security, not of one ethnic group to the detriment of others, but of all.

This was therefore not an attempt to undermine democracy, as some claim. The Government wants, instead, to end the massacre of innocent populations battling with the various armed factions within the country and outside, from the capital to the heart of Burundi, to restore peace and security for all and create conditions conducive to comprehensive democratization based on national realities.

The efforts being undertaken by the new administration to restore peace and organize dialogue and national debate have been hampered by the economic sanctions against Burundi. I am duty-bound to draw the attention of representatives here to the damaging effects of the economic blockade imposed on my country at the Second Arusha Regional Summit on Burundi on 31 July 1996. The international community must not, one day, say that it did not know. The countries of our subregion were more than anyone else aware of the chaotic and complicated situation in Burundi before 25 July 1996. They also knew of the almost total institutional paralysis as a result of the crisis. Every day they see my country's continuous struggle to restore peace and security despite the host of difficulties before us.

We therefore see the embargo imposed on Burundi as unfriendly, unjust and illegal. It violates international public law and the international accords and conventions that our countries have ratified. The embargo, which is really a total economic blockade against my country, constitutes a dangerous precedent, violating Article 1, paragraph 2, of the Charter of the United Nations regarding the right of peoples to self-determination and the sovereignty and equality of States.

This blockade flouts the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other States as stipulated in Article III, paragraph 2, of the Charter of the Organization of African Unity and the Declaration of 24 October 1970 adopted by the General Assembly on the duty of States to refrain from interfering in the domestic affairs of other States.

The nature of the sanctions adopted flies in the face of the principle of the non-use of force and the peaceful settlement of international disputes in accordance with the Declaration of 24 October 1970 adopted by the General Assembly. We know that States are prohibited from using

force against another State, even in the case of damages caused by the latter.

In the case of Burundi, there was no damage to any of our neighbours. However, our access to the sea, our right of transit and our freedom of trade have been taken away. The illegality of the embargo is obvious, since international and regional treaties recognizing Member States' freedom of transit have been violated.

These instruments include the Marrakesh Agreement establishing the World Trade Organization, the treaty on the Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa, the Convention on Transit Trade of Land-Locked States, not to mention the charters and agreements of neighbouring countries, such as the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries and the preferential trade area.

What is worse — and we would emphasize this here before the General Assembly — the sanctions imposed are hindering the action of our Government, weakening the chances for peace and working in favour of the extremist militias and armed bands, which feel encouraged by them. At this very moment, the latter are using the embargo to intensify their acts of violence and destruction in the country.

The embargo imposed on Burundi has had catastrophic consequences on people who, as a result, find themselves deprived of urgently needed medications, vaccines, diagnostic materials and surgical instruments. Today, children, women and the elderly are dying.

The vaccination rate, which, because of three years of war, has fallen from 80 per cent to 30 per cent among children under five years of age, may soon reach zero if nothing is done to improve the situation in the meantime. That will necessarily have an impact on the most vulnerable members of the population. Further, the population of Burundi is at risk of widespread famine, which will have unfortunate consequences for the inhabitants of neighbouring countries. It will have a greater impact on the most vulnerable, namely, displaced persons, the homeless and the repatriated, which latter group has already been living for three years now in inhuman conditions. Nearly 80 per cent of them are children, women and the elderly.

Lastly, owing to lack of fuel and non-availability of educational materials, a large number of pupils and students may leave school. The drop-out rate is already

18 per cent for secondary education, 21 per cent for technical training and 20 per cent for university studies.

As for the economic aspects of the embargo, I would point out that Burundi lives essentially on agriculture and animal husbandry. There will be a sharp decline in our harvest if fertilizers, concentrates and veterinary pharmaceuticals continue to be held by embargo in the ports of neighbouring countries. The result will obviously be widespread famine.

The few industries still operating are gradually shutting down owing to lack of raw materials. State revenues are at a dangerously low level because of our inability to export and import. That will lead to unemployment or inability to pay workers in both the public and private sectors and foment social unrest that will increase insecurity and destabilize the country. Overall, the situation will favour the retaking of territory and strengthen the armed actions of rebel groups and other outlaw bands against the peaceful population, with the risk of widespread civil war.

This apocalyptic prospect can and must be avoided. The neighbouring countries behind the embargo had demanded that the new regime end its suspension of the National Assembly and political parties and commit itself to dialogue with the armed groups, points that are priorities of the new regime's programme made public on 25 July 1996. Decree Number 100-023 of 13 September 1996 has just reinstated Parliament, the political parties and political associations.

Furthermore, the Government of Burundi has just reiterated its solemn commitment to engage in dialogue and to discuss all the country's fundamental questions with all interested political partners, including armed groups. We renew that commitment here before the Assembly.

That measure, which is already a priority of the new regime, was the latest recommendation of the Arusha Summit Meeting on 31 July 1996. Now that my Government has responded positively and promptly to the conditions fixed by its neighbours, we invite them to take all appropriate steps to lift the embargo immediately so as to alleviate the indescribable suffering of the people of Burundi and to enable dialogue — which is also hindered by the embargo — to take place by opening lines of communication, both on the ground and in the air, and by fulfilling their commitments.

My country, Burundi, seeks to play an active and constructive role in the development of peaceful, friendly and mutually beneficial relations with countries of the region and the rest of the world. In return, we require of our partners that they refrain from threat or use of force or from any other action incompatible with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter.

Because of the war and the embargo, my country continues to suffer from a very critical economic situation. It is land-locked and therefore must rely on its neighbours for the transit of its exports and imports. For that reason, we attach great importance to the policy of good-neighbourliness and non-interference in the internal affairs of other States.

My Government is perfectly well aware of the concerns of the international community over the crisis in Burundi. We express our gratitude to all our bilateral and multilateral partners that have given us their support, solidarity and understanding in this difficult period.

However, we remain convinced that the imposition of conditions about the pace and the way to resolve the current conflict cannot benefit the people of Burundi. We are determined to find lasting and definitive solutions to the evil that is eroding Burundi, but such complex problems cannot be resolved by precipitate action or by holding a knife to our throats.

The political situation in the Great Lakes region continues to be cause for concern. This geographical area holds the sad world record for number of refugees. Following the genocide carried out in Rwanda in April 1994, several hundreds of thousands of persons sought asylum in neighbouring countries, particularly in Zaire and Tanzania.

Following the crisis of October 1993, those countries also contained tens of thousands of Burundi's citizens, who swelled the ranks of those gone into exile. In February 1995 an international Conference about this thorny question was held in Bujumbura, under the auspices of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees. The decisions and recommendations made at that time have remained virtually a dead letter. However, we have noted the voluntary and peaceful repatriation of a large number of Rwandan refugees who had sought asylum in Burundi.

The OAU and the United Nations, through the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees,

should step up their initiatives designed to encourage all persons who wish to return to their countries once the conditions of peace and security have been met. The authorities of the countries concerned must, of course, play a primary role. The Government of Burundi, for its part, is prepared to welcome at any time all of our nationals who wish to return to their respective homes. To that end, it is now organizing and doing all it can to bring about the rapid restoration of a climate of peace, understanding and national reconciliation.

We encourage all efforts being made by neighbouring countries, by friendly countries, the Organization of African Unity, the European Union and the United Nations on behalf of this troubled region and to return the situation as a whole to normal.

At the same time, we draw the attention of the international community to other scourges and other phenomena that are rife in this geographical area. I am referring to the trafficking in and proliferation of weapons and the training of militias and armed groups that foment terrorism and threaten the security of our fellow citizens from certain neighbouring countries.

We note the spread of the ideology of genocide, hatred, violence and marginalization made manifest in intolerance and ethnic fundamentalism. The pernicious ideas propagated by the champions of those ideologies will, in the long term, generate social upheavals with political and ethnic roots that will in turn cause enormous human and material damage. The genocide in Rwanda, the massacres perpetrated in Burundi since the October 1993 crisis, the killings we have witnessed in South Kivu, in particular in the Massissi region and very recently in the region of Uvira, are the best example of this threat to peace and security in our subregion.

The international community must mobilize to combat such inhuman and degrading acts, whose philosophy is so strangely reminiscent of notorious Hitlerite nazism.

With regard to the other conflicts with which Africa is beset, the Government of Burundi welcomes the positive developments in the situation in Somalia and in Liberia. It appreciates the decisive role played by the OAU, the United Nations and subregional organizations in helping to sort out differences and commit the parties to disputes to a process of peace and reconciliation.

In that connection, my Government welcomes the establishment by the OAU of a Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution. African leaders have thereby demonstrated their determination to become more involved in solving problems on their own continent.

We take this opportunity to express our thanks to the European Union, the United Nations and other bilateral partners for the political, material and financial support given that initiative. To that end, Burundi is convinced of the overriding importance of preventive diplomacy and the peaceful settlement of disputes through dialogue and negotiation.

The United Nations has two main priorities, namely, the Agenda for Peace and the Agenda for Development. Their success entails a determined struggle against terrorism and organized crime as well as the elimination of the nuclear threat. Burundi therefore supports the organization of an international criminal tribunal.

Burundi's representative to the United Nations has just signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. My Government warmly welcomes that noble decision by the General Assembly of our Organization. It is a signally important step towards the establishment of a world of peace free from the threat of meaningless death caused by man himself.

The Government of Burundi is also concerned about other contemporary scourges, such as the trafficking in and the distribution and consumption of drugs and other psychotropic substances. They are a grave danger, especially for our young people who are our future. Apart from their deleterious effects on health, they are a formidable weapon in the hands of the supporters of international terrorism.

For that reason, we wholeheartedly support efforts being made within the framework of international cooperation to eradicate that disaster confronting humanity. We emphasize this fact, for armed groups that are organized to rob, rape, burn and kill sate themselves with these harmful substances to kill in cold blood, without remorse and without pity.

Several delegations have recognized the fact that many African Governments are increasingly committed to shouldering their responsibilities for the development of their continent. It has been noted, in particular, that over the past two years the average growth rate in gross domestic product has reached 5 per cent. Those efforts deserve encouragement

Nevertheless, the burden of external debt continues to weigh heavily on many of our countries and often undermines their development efforts. That is why the Government of Burundi pleads for the substantial easing of external debt in order to give every chance to programmes aimed at improving the living standard of our people.

I should like to join other eminent heads of delegation who have spoken earlier in announcing that my Government shares the hope that our Organization will be reformed and made into an efficient and effective instrument better able to respond to the purposes and principles assigned it by its founding fathers. The United Nations must adapt its structures and working methods to the current and future concerns of our planet and all humankind.

We view with special attention the ongoing discussions on restructuring the Security Council to allow for more equitable representation in that body, to increase its membership and to achieve its general democratization. Given their political and economic advantages, Germany and Japan have legitimate aspirations for permanent seats in the Security Council, as does Italy. Since none of the proposals before us commands general support, it is just as legitimate to take into account the cogent suggestion put forward by Italy for a possible rotation of permanent seats among States of respective regions. We believe that Africa, Asia and Latin America should have at least two permanent seats per region in that lofty, decision-making body of the Organization.

My country, Burundi, wishes to reaffirm its total commitment to and unswerving support for the noble ideas upheld by the Organization. We hope that the United Nations will continue to move forward in the struggle against racism, intolerance, xenophobia, terrorism and child prostitution. It is our ardent desire to see this vast home of mankind promote and further promulgate the values of peace, freedom and mutual respect and fraternity among men in order to stave off for all time the spectre of war, hunger and famine in the world, through a more generous and more committed international cooperation. All countries of the world, rich and poor, small and large, are urged to join forces to meet that challenge: the challenge of building a better future in a more just, more peaceful, more human world.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.



General Assembly

Fifty-first Session

17th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 1 October 1996, 3 p.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Razali Ismail (Malaysia)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 9 (continued)

General debate

The President: The first speaker this afternoon is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates, His Excellency Mr. Rashid Abdullah Al-Noaimi, on whom I now call.

Mr. Al-Noaimi (United Arab Emirates) (*interpretation from Arabic*): It gives me great pleasure to extend to you, Sir, on behalf of the delegation of the United Arab Emirates, our congratulations on your election as President of this session of the General Assembly. Your election is indeed an expression of the international community's faith in your competence and vast diplomatic expertise, and of the high esteem in which we hold your friendly country, Malaysia. At the same time, allow me to thank sincerely your predecessor, who so ably led the deliberations of the previous session of the General Assembly.

I should also like to take this opportunity to pay a warm tribute to the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for the positive and important role he has played in the past few years. My country supports his re-election for a second term and appreciates his efforts to enhance the role of the Organization in the maintenance of international peace and security.

The fifty-first session of the United Nations General Assembly is being held amid new international circumstances and developments that have both positively and negatively affected the global scene. Despite the relative optimism that has permeated international relations, threats to peace and security and to economic, social and human development worldwide still remain. The present *détente* in regional and international relations does not necessarily mean that the international climate has become more harmonious or homogenous. The security and political independence of small States is still threatened by the ambitions of States aspiring to spread their hegemony and expand at the expense of their neighbours.

The political situation in the Arabian Gulf region during the past two decades has made us increasingly convinced of the importance of rebuilding confidence among the countries of the region. This confidence must be anchored in the principles of full and mutual respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of States, and of refraining from the threat or use of force. Every State has the right to choose its political, economic and social system, to preserve its natural resources and to resort to peaceful negotiations as a means of settling disputes within the context of bilateral, regional and international initiatives and endeavours.

We also support the peaceful efforts currently under way to complete the demarcation of borders among the States of the region in order to enhance the national



sovereignty of each State. This will contribute to the achievement of lasting peace, security and stability in the region.

Inspired by our tradition, our history and our commitment to peace, we in the United Arab Emirates firmly believe that the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law are the proper means of settling disputes among nations.

Twenty-five years have passed since the occupation by the Islamic Republic of Iran of our three islands, Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa. These are Arab islands, both in their history and in their origin. They are the pillars of our national sovereignty, territorial integrity and overall inalienable national rights. Since the beginning of the conflict, the United Arab Emirates has called on the Iranian Government to end its occupation of the islands and to enter into bilateral negotiations or seek the arbitration of the International Court of Justice. Referring the case to the International Court of Justice will ensure that each State has a chance to submit the relevant legal and historical documents and evidence to support its claim of sovereignty over the three islands.

Despite our declared peaceful intentions, the mediation efforts of some friendly countries and the good offices of the Secretary-General, the Iranian Government rejected our peaceful endeavours. It has established and equipped facilities on the three islands whose features are not exclusively civilian. It has built an electrical power plant on Greater Tunb; and an airport, a refrigeration plant and a fish-processing plant on Abu Musa. Moreover, Iranian nationals, mostly from the military, have been settled on the islands. We view this as a clear act of provocation aimed at changing the demographic character of the islands and imposing a new *fait accompli*. Through these acts and by ignoring the repercussions of such a policy on the peace and security of the region and on international navigation, Iran has consolidated its illegitimate occupation.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has failed to heed the repeated, serious and sincere appeals made by the United Arab Emirates, the Gulf Co-operation Council, the Arab States of the Gulf, the last Arab Summit meeting, the Council of the League of Arab States and the States parties to the Damascus Declaration to settle the dispute through peaceful means. This violates not only our country's national sovereignty, but also international law and all the international principles, norms and practices governing

relations among States, particularly among neighbouring States.

We therefore call on the Government of Iran to dismantle all the illegitimately established civilian and military facilities on our three islands. We also call upon Iran to respond to the peace initiatives we have advanced and which are supported by sisterly and friendly peace-loving countries; to enter into unconditional bilateral negotiations conducive to a peaceful settlement of the dispute; or to refer the case to the International Court of Justice.

Security, stability and sustainable development are urgent needs of societies all over the globe. My country, which has always supported the inalienable rights of peoples to resist occupation and aggression, condemns all forms of terrorism and the acts of subversion and sabotage facing the international community today. In this connection, we agree with and support all the measures taken by the State of Bahrain to preserve its security, its national sovereignty and its political independence.

In this context, we reiterate our full support for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in its fight against terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, and against all threats to its national security. We believe that the member States of the Gulf Co-operation Council are bound by the threads of a common destiny defined by the requirements of peace and security of the whole region. Terrorism defies all international norms and practices and runs counter to religious and cultural beliefs, which are the pillars of stability and prosperity for all societies. It must therefore be addressed in an international context.

The United Arab Emirates has followed with grave concern the recent developments in Iraq. We reaffirm the importance we attach to preserving Iraq's national sovereignty and territorial integrity. We oppose any interference in its internal affairs and the establishment by neighbouring States of safety zones on its territory. In the same context, we support all the measures taken by the State of Kuwait to preserve its sovereignty, security and territorial integrity.

The escalating human suffering of the Iraqi people and the spread of disease and malnutrition call for the immediate and full implementation of Security Council resolution 986 (1995). However, the ultimate responsibility for the alleviation of the suffering of the Iraqi people rests solely with the Government of Iraq. This can be realized only when the Iraqi Government

complies fully with its international obligations under the relevant Security Council resolutions. Those obligations include the release of all Kuwaitis and other nationals imprisoned or detained by Iraq and the return of all Kuwaiti property still in its possession.

My country supported the Agreement on Principles concluded between the Republic of Yemen and Eritrea on the Hanish archipelago. We renew our call to the two Governments to commit to the principle of peaceful settlement through international arbitration so that peace and security can prevail in this region. We take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the Government of France for its mediation efforts.

The United Arab Emirates welcomed the peace negotiations in the Middle East, beginning with the Madrid Conference through the subsequent agreements relative to the question of Palestine. We are disappointed by the position of the Israeli Government, which has not honoured the commitments entered into by its predecessor. The Israeli Government has refused to withdraw from the city of Hebron, and has embarked on an expansion of its illegitimate settlement activities. More recently, it opened a tunnel adjacent to Al-Haram al-Sharif, the Noble Sanctuary, which threatens the structures of the Al-Aqsa Mosque and alters the demographic character and legal status of the city of Jerusalem. This is an act of provocation that will arouse the feelings of Arabs and Muslims, and will obstruct the achievement of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace settlement to the Middle East problem and the Palestinian question.

At the Security Council meeting held last week, the international community reaffirmed its solidarity with the Palestinian people, its support of the peace process, and its opposition to all the measures recently taken by the Israeli Government. The United Arab Emirates condemns all the acts of violence recently committed by the Israeli occupying authorities against the Palestinian people, which resulted in firing at and thus the martyrdom of many Palestinians, in addition to the injuries sustained by many more. We call on the Israeli Government to put an end to its barbaric practices, which run counter to the most basic norms of international humanitarian law.

The Arab parties are determined to pursue the peace process as an objective and a strategic option to which there is no alternative. This calls for a reciprocal commitment by the Israeli side, without any further delay or procrastination. This commitment must be proven by the actual, unconditional implementation of all relevant

agreements thus far concluded, to enable the Palestinian people to exercise their legitimate rights, including their right to self-determination and to the establishment of their own independent State, with Jerusalem as its capital. It must also include full Israeli withdrawal from the Syrian Golan to the 4 June 1967 line, and from southern Lebanon and the western Bekaa, to the internationally recognized borders, pursuant to Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), and the principle of land for peace. These measures will guarantee balanced and equitable security for all the States of the region, and realize their peoples' aspirations for a new era of comprehensive economic and social development.

We fully subscribe to the international call for a regional and international nuclear-test ban, and for the establishment of international zones free of all weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons. These weapons pose a grave danger to our health, our environment and our natural resources. I recently had the honour to sign, on behalf of the United Arab Emirates, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, thus enhancing its universality. We call upon the international community and the relevant international bodies to spare no effort to make the Middle East and the Arab Gulf region a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons. The international community must call on Israel to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and to comply with the international safeguards regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Despite the efforts and good offices of the League of Arab States and the United Nations to save Somalia from its predicament, the civil war there continues unabated, and the deteriorating humanitarian situation is cause for grave concern. We therefore appeal to the rival Somali faction leaders to shoulder their responsibility and bring this tragic bloodshed to an end. They must set aside their differences and form a national Government representing all the factions of the Somali people, a Government that can restore to Somalia its national unity, territorial integrity, security and stability.

Political developments in the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina testify to the importance that the international community attaches to the Dayton Peace Agreement, with a view to restoring normal conditions in the Republic. My country supported that Agreement. We consider it the first constructive step on the road to a just and permanent settlement of the Balkan problem. We

welcome the results of the recent elections in the Republic of Bosnia Herzegovina. We hope that these elections will safeguard the territorial integrity of the Republic and contribute to the establishment of democratic institutions. We also hope that they will help restore normal relations among the Bosnian people and pave the way for reconstruction, following the war's devastation. Peace, security and stability can then return to this tormented region. We take this opportunity to stress the importance of bringing to justice war criminals who have committed heinous crimes against humanity and humanitarian international law in the former Yugoslavia.

The tragic events, raging wars and civil strife, and untold human suffering of the peoples of some African countries, are cause for grave concern. In view of the historic relations that bind our countries together, we reiterate our support for the efforts of the Organization of African Unity in cooperation with the United Nations to contain the conflicts by peaceful means so that their peoples' aspirations to peace, security, stability and development may be realized.

The economic and social gap between the nations of the world is still wide in spite of positive political and economic developments on the regional and international scene, the creation of economic blocs, and free trade in the world. This has led to the exacerbation of poverty, illiteracy and disease in many developing countries. Those countries are already ailing under the heavy burden of debt and debt-servicing, and are suffering from the deterioration of living standards and dwindling development assistance from developed countries, in addition to trade barriers adversely affecting their economies.

The world conferences held over the past five years achieved important results, and their recommendations have become important strategies aimed at creating an equitable and prosperous international environment. The international community, which is still plagued by persistent violence, organized crime, drugs and terrorism, must translate these recommendations into a reality that will guarantee equitable economic and social development and the free flow of trade between the developed and the developing countries.

We firmly believe that this Organization still represents mankind's conscience in the face of lingering world problems. To enhance its role under the Charter, the international community needs to provide the necessary political, financial and moral support to the Organization. We must undertake major structural reforms, enlarge the Security Council membership in accordance with the

principle of equitable geographic distribution, and improve the functioning of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the specialized agencies, so that they can respond adequately to current regional and international developments.

I would also like to stress the importance of cooperation, consultation and coordination between the United Nations and regional organizations. These organizations can assist the United Nations to arrive at a better understanding of regional problems that can affect peace, security and sustainable development.

In conclusion, we hope that our aspirations will find proper expression in the commitment by the States of the world to the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law. We look forward to the realization of the noble objectives of this Organization.

The President: The next speaker is His Excellency Mr. Amara Essy, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Côte d'Ivoire and former President of the General Assembly, on whom I now call.

Mr. Essy (Côte d'Ivoire) (*interpretation from French*): My delegation and I are pleased, Sir, to see you presiding over the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. Your great experience of multilateral diplomacy, along with the apt initiatives which your great country, Malaysia, and you yourself have taken in many focal areas of international relations make you the right person to guide us and to ensure the success of this important session.

I extend my sincere congratulations to your predecessor, Ambassador Diogo Freitas do Amaral, for the outstanding work he did in heading the General Assembly at a difficult time, marked by a financial crisis unprecedented in the history of our Organization. Thanks to his abilities and diplomacy, he helped to preserve the founding roles of this institution, namely the maintenance of peace and of economic and social development, and to guide it towards new areas. We are particularly grateful to him for his excellent work at the last session, which marked the fiftieth anniversary of our Organization.

The delegation of Côte d'Ivoire would also like to thank the Secretary-General for the active and determined part that he has always played in heading the Secretariat, particularly in the areas of peacekeeping and economic and social development. Accordingly, the Côte d'Ivoire endorses the Declaration of African Heads of

State or Government, who, at the thirty-second Summit of the Organization of African Unity, held at Yaoundé, reaffirmed Africa's right to a second term and recommended the candidature of Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

Nearly a year ago, on 22 October 1995, a Special Commemorative Meeting of the General Assembly took place, involving 129 Heads of State or Government who had come here solemnly to reconfirm their belief in the ideals of the Charter of the United Nations, namely peace, development, international cooperation, equality and justice, and also to demonstrate their commitment to the reform and modernization of our Organization so that it can take up the challenges of the future. In the Declaration on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations, adopted on 24 October last, we committed ourselves to assuring that we:

"will give to the twenty-first century a United Nations equipped, financed and structured to serve effectively the peoples in whose name it was established."
(resolution 50/6)

Encouraged by Ambassador Diogo Freitas do Amaral over the past year, the General Assembly and the Secretariat have advanced on the path of reform for the United Nations and clarification of its objectives and missions. The open-ended working groups of the General Assembly responsible for examining "An Agenda for Peace", the Agenda for Development, Security Council reform, the financial situation of the United Nations, and the strengthening of the United Nations system, have sufficiently progressed in their considerations to allow the greatest hopes as to the restructuring of our Organization, its revitalization with an eye to greater effectiveness adapted to contemporary needs and challenges.

I would add that after a decade of study and reflection on United Nations reform, it is now imperative to proceed with such reform so that we can focus on what constitutes the *raison d'être* of our Organization: its essential missions, namely, the maintenance of peace and security, the promotion of economic and social development, the struggle against poverty, humanitarian assistance, the protection of human rights and democracy, the protection of the environment, dialogue among cultures and respect for diversity.

Concomitant with this progress by Member State towards reform, there has been an equally commendable effort by the Secretariat to correct the Organization's

disfunctions, particularly those relating to fragmentation within the United Nations system and the inadequacy of certain coordinating mechanisms, as well as, in some cases, the absence of a rational division of labour, which has led to overlapping and duplication.

I would particularly like to mention, among other things, the progress that has been made towards the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields pursuant to resolution 50/227. On the basis of that resolution, the Economic and Social Council will carry out its work within a rationalized framework that should enable it to attain the objectives assigned to it under the Charter. Its working methods will also be adapted to the necessity of better time management and greater budgetary savings, operating on the basis of a rational reduction in the many outputs of this body, with a view to assuring greater effectiveness. Thanks to this resolution, we should be able slowly to move away from the heavy and spendthrift bureaucracy associated with our Organization.

It is in this spirit that, in anticipation, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was able to reform its working methods, redeploy its people in the field and develop its activities thanks to a fruitful partnership within and beyond the United Nations system, notably with representatives of civil society. This truly remarkable transformation of UNDP over the past two years has enabled it to regain a central role in operational activities for development on all continents, particularly in Africa, where it is steering the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for Africa.

Reform is an act of the will that plays itself out over time. It must be carried out from the inside and under the impetus of Member States. In this regard, we may welcome the evaluation of the Efficiency Board chaired by Under-Secretary-General Joseph Connor, whose work is highly encouraging as to the rational management of the United Nations system.

Thus, all the sectors where overlapping and duplication were most obvious have now been singled out with a view to proper management that will generate substantial economies in the budgetary performance of the Secretariat. Here we would like to say how pleased we are that the Secretary-General was able to hold the United Nations budget for 1996-1997 within the strict limits defined by the General Assembly. The \$150 million in savings are the result of a set of measures aimed at rationalizing and maximizing the cost-

effectiveness ratio of the work of the Secretariat, as can be seen in the first report of the United Nations Efficiency Board, which was made public last month.

The new spirit of budgetary strictness and administrative efficiency that is becoming prevalent within the Secretariat and among those in charge of the agencies and programmes of the United Nations system seems to have given us a new awareness of the need for self-examination and for concrete responses to the needs of Member States.

With close links between thinking and operational activities, and with an increasing presence on the ground, the United Nations will be closer to the people, and thus better able to take into account their needs in a number of areas, such as employment, education, health, humanitarian assistance and environment.

Specifically on the question of humanitarian assistance, we should highlight the remarkable way in which the United Nations has adapted in dealing with the refugee problems resulting from internal conflicts in various parts of the world. There are millions of displaced persons, and this situation is without precedent since 1945. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) have been particularly effective in this area.

I think these examples are enough to rehabilitate the United Nations in the minds of some. If we were to believe its detractors, our Organization would be bureaucratic, behind the times, ineffective and yet extravagant. While some of these criticisms were perhaps justified to some extent in the past, today we can say that our Organization is moving resolutely towards reform and a structural and functional transformation that started a decade ago.

Last year in San Francisco, 50 years after the founding of the United Nations, the international community reaffirmed at the highest level of leadership the relevance to today's world of the Charter and its purposes and principles. Through this important act, the international community enshrined its commitment to attaining the objectives set out in the Charter. The Declaration of 24 October 1995 also confirmed the essential tasks of the United Nations for the year 2000: promoting peace, development, equality, justice and understanding among peoples. It also gave a special place to the advancement of women and the protection of children.

In order to carry out these tasks, in the last few years Member States have worked out careful strategies through the cycle, ending this year, of thematic conferences that began in New York in 1990 with the World Summit for Children, continued in Rio with the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, in Vienna with the World Conference on Human Rights, in Cairo with the International Conference on Population and Development, in Copenhagen with the World Summit for Social Development, in Beijing with the Fourth World Conference on Women and in Istanbul with the Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II). In this connection, we should also emphasize the importance of the upcoming World Food Summit, to be held under the auspices of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Rome in November 1996. Complementing these initiatives, the Agenda for Peace and the Agenda for Development provide an appropriate framework for thinking about the important interrelationship and interaction between peace and development.

Along the same lines, and without being exhaustive in my list, I would like to recall the progress made last year in the areas of peace and disarmament with the signing on 24 September 1996 of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. The establishment of new nuclear-weapon-free zones in South-East Asia, the South Pacific and Africa, and measures relating to nuclear safety and security are also positive achievements in this area.

In conflict prevention, on the initiative of Canada and the Netherlands excellent progress has been made in developing the rapid-reaction capability of the United Nations to respond to threats to peace and security. Other initiatives from various sources also bear witness to the growing concern over preventing conflicts and acting in advance, particularly in the area of development, so as to create conditions for consolidating social peace in Member States.

With regard to human rights and fundamental freedoms, I would underline the specific, dynamic and publicly visible results of some recent United Nations decisions, such as the establishment of a High Commissioner for Human Rights, the establishment and effective functioning of International Tribunals to prosecute and judge persons accused of serious violations of human rights in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda,

and measures taken, or scheduled to be taken, in combating terrorism and organized crime.

For these reasons, I think we can say that the United Nations is now a much more coherent instrument vis-à-vis its objectives, its missions and its strategies. However, we must complete the renewal that is now under way. I have already stressed that the Secretariat's efforts to adapt, carried out through austerity measures, are healthy, but the dividends should be used to strengthen operational activities for development.

The other central organs — the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council — must make continued, deeper-going transformations to update their structures, their functioning and their working methods and adapt them to special circumstances that are unlike the post-world-conflict circumstances of 1945.

In this connection, and with particular regard to the General Assembly, I should say, as I did when I presided over the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly, that this body, within the context of the institutional balances provided for in the Charter, should continue to play its full part in the reform process under way. The General Assembly, because of its unique form of legitimacy, is still the best guarantor of the common interests of the Member States.

As this fifty-first session begins, we find ourselves at a crossroads. Last October we resoundingly reaffirmed the irreplaceable nature of the United Nations. Today, showing political will and above all a spirit of solidarity, we must now translate that commitment into action. Without this reaffirmation of solidarity, the values on which the international community rests will become rather meaningless. Our Organization must tirelessly continue to seek ways of strengthening this solidarity. We do not see it as much as we would like to, and the frustration of developing countries is growing because of situations in which international cooperation targets are simply disregarded and many promises remain unkept.

It is one thing to establish aid programmes and time-frames, but it is another to move ahead and actually do what the international community has committed itself to do. Of course, the United Nations is often judged by international public opinion on the basis of its ability to consolidate peace. But its credibility also depends on its ability to act firmly in order to fill the increasingly wide gap between the rich and the developing countries.

It is high time that development aid found its place in an effort to mobilize, in which the actors, the industrialized countries and the developing countries all get their fair share. One cannot talk simultaneously about the existence of universal values, such as democracy or human rights, and still feel satisfied with a situation in which poverty and the AIDS epidemic are steadily gaining ground, thus exacerbating the divisions within the international community and thwarting national efforts.

In this context, the effort to combat AIDS must be a subject of particular concern because of its devastating world-wide effects, especially in developing countries, where 90 per cent of HIV-positive individuals are located — 60 per cent in Africa alone — but which do not have the resources to deal with this pandemic. On the question of access to medicines, particularly anti-retrovirus agents, it seems unacceptable to us that such preventive medicines are available to only 10 per cent of those suffering from AIDS/HIV.

However, also within the context of international cooperation to combat AIDS, we welcome some strong action that has been taken. For example, we welcome the Economic and Social Council resolution making the question of AIDS as one of the topics for its 1997 high-level segment. We would also place great hope in the commitments made to provide the Secretariat with an appropriate structure and relevant resources to support the United Nations AIDS Programme.

I would like to speak more about Africa, as many representatives already have, because the picture painted is often very far from the reality. There is little in common between the usual clichés about the wretched situation in Africa and the velvet revolution which our countries are engaged in carrying out. We have suffered from the scourge of the economic crisis which has spared no continent. We have suffered from the globalization of the economy, in which we have been marginalized. We in Africa are now beginning to reverse this trend. All the specialists agree that Africa has set forth on the path to economic recovery, with an average growth rate last year of 5 per cent.

For my own country, Côte d'Ivoire, I can say that after the 1980s, which were marked by a difficult economic and financial crisis, the Government adopted a coherent economic policy, backed by thorough sectoral strategies to obtain viable, strong, self-sustaining growth. Stabilization and adjustment programmes begun in 1993 enabled the Côte d'Ivoire to meet the conditions in 1994

for a recovery with greater diversification in our economy, greater weight being given to the private sector and careful management of public finances, and a re-centering of State control in the areas of regulation monitoring and in the environment of economic activities. This policy enabled us to achieve a 7-per-cent growth rate in 1995, and suggests that we can achieve double-digit growth in 1998, which is the goal of President Henri Konan-Bédié, whose plan is to make Côte d'Ivoire a truly industrialized nation.

Along with efforts to win the fight for development, African countries have also committed themselves to democratization, as can be seen, *inter alia*, in the organization of multi-party elections, the establishment of the rule of law and the emergence of a responsible civil society. Backed up by true legitimacy, political leaders are about to succeed in building modern States with the primary purpose of ensuring national cohesion and progress.

The advances that we see here and there on our continent must be backed up by more sustained action by the industrialized countries. Time is running out, and we must move quickly from speeches, promises and good intentions to concrete action. The adoption of the Agenda for Development ought, therefore, to be an opportunity for re-thinking the philosophy underlying development assistance, its mechanisms and its modalities, so that socio-economic activities can be placed at the centre of the work of the United Nations.

The President: I now call on the Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia, His Excellency Abdul-Rahman Mansouri.

Mr. Mansouri (Saudi Arabia) (*interpretation from Arabic*): It gives me pleasure, as we begin the work of this session, to convey to you, Sir, on behalf of the delegation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, our sincerest congratulations on your election to the presidency of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. Your assumption of that important position reflects the appreciation of Member States both of your personal qualities and of the positive role your country plays in the international arena. We wish you success in fulfilling your mission and assure you of our readiness and desire to cooperate with you fully in achieving the objectives of this session.

I wish also to take this opportunity to congratulate your predecessor, Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, for his effective guidance of the affairs of the General Assembly

last session, which witnessed the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of our Organization.

I would also like to convey my sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, who manages the affairs of this international Organization with exceptional ability and competence in a rapidly changing world. In order to deal with increasing expectations regarding the present and future role of the United Nations, we consider that a renewal of his tenure will provide him the opportunity to complete ongoing plans and efforts to reform the United Nations and to restore its constructive role in the international arena.

A year has passed since we celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations. That celebration, attended by many world leaders, gave us a valuable opportunity to recall the importance of the role of the United Nations in maintaining international peace and security and in enhancing international legitimacy. It also provided us with an opportunity to review the Organization's accomplishments and challenges over the past 50 years.

The current session of the General Assembly marks the beginning of a new era for the United Nations, which we hope will witness a consolidation of its role on the international scene to the benefit of Member States and in accordance with the principles and purposes of the Charter. It is our firm belief that this international forum can play an extremely important and effective role in managing crises, in averting wars and conflicts, and in providing the means for international cooperation. This obliges us to be more persistent than ever before in supporting this institution and enhancing its constructive role.

The changes which have occurred in the world over the past decade are so dramatic that they have created a new international reality with a host of new challenges. These developments offer new opportunities to bolster the principles of the United Nations for the benefit of strengthening international legitimacy including justice and equality among nations, the rejection of the use of force in the settlement of conflicts, the preservation of the dignity of mankind, and providing security and prosperity for all. We should also recall the fact, to which many world leaders referred during the fiftieth anniversary celebrations, that the ability of this international Organization to resolve global problems, crises and conflicts depends greatly on the political will

of Member States to abide by the principles of the United Nations. It is our hope that the future will witness greater determination by Member States to ensure the achievement of the objectives upon which the future of our Organization depends, a future which is also ours.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is fully cognizant of the importance of reforming United Nations bodies so that they may fulfil their prescribed roles and deal effectively with the global changes we have witnessed in recent years. Among these bodies, the Security Council, as the principal organ directly concerned with the maintenance of international peace and security, remains the focus for reform. My country's view was and remains that any changes to the structure of the Security Council should be geared towards enhancing its ability to accomplish its role effectively as stipulated in the Charter and to refrain from any action that would limit its effectiveness in fulfilling its purposes.

Arab leaders, at their summit meeting in Cairo last June, expressed their firm commitment to continue the peace process which they regard as an irreversible strategic goal. The Cairo meeting reaffirmed that the realization of a just and comprehensive peace within the realm of international legitimacy presupposes a serious and unequivocal commitment by Israel to abide by the principles of the Madrid Peace Conference and Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), as well as by the land-for-peace formula. The Arab leaders also reaffirmed that any breach by Israel of these principles and agreed-upon commitments and agreements, or any delay in their implementation, would result in a setback to the peace process, with all its dangerous consequences.

We view with great concern the Israeli Government's failure to demonstrate a degree of seriousness and commitment to the peace process comparable to that demonstrated by the Arab States. Since assuming office, the Government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has continued to issue statements and undertake actions that do not serve the cause of peace. In contrast to the Arab States' commitment to the Madrid principles, to Security Council resolutions and to the land-for-peace formula, the statements made by the Israeli Government indicate an insistence on consolidating of its occupation of Arab lands; maintaining its annexation of East Jerusalem; and delaying the agreed-upon redeployment of its troops from Al-Khalil. We are also concerned by the Israeli Government's continued closure of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, together with its proclaimed rejection of withdrawing from

the Syrian Golan Heights. Recently, the Israeli authorities opened a tunnel under the Al-Aqsa Mosque. This was a flagrant infringement upon the Islamic sanctuaries and a clear violation of binding international resolutions on the status of Jerusalem. We welcome Security Council resolution 1073 (1996), which the Council issued after the events that resulted from the Israeli measures. We hope that the summit conference sponsored by the President of the United States of America will help with the implementation of that Security Council resolution and give momentum to the peace process on the basis of that resolution and in accordance with its principles.

Statements by the Israeli Prime Minister that Israel is prepared to resume negotiations without preconditions are no more than an attempt to distance himself from the Madrid-based principles and fundamentals of the peace process, in particular the land-for-peace formula. Such a position can only mark a serious setback. Hence, we call upon the United States of America and the Russian Federation, as the co-sponsors of the Madrid Peace Conference, to do their utmost to continue the peace process on all tracks in order to reach the desired results.

In this context we value the positive and constructive positions on this matter reflected in the Florence statement of the European Union and the Lyon statement of the Group of Seven. Furthermore, we reiterate our call to all parties concerned to fulfil their commitments to provide economic assistance to the Palestinian people. While we call upon members of the international community to increase their economic assistance to the Palestinian Authority, we should remember the need to deal with actions undertaken by the Israeli Government which might prevent the Palestinians from benefiting from this aid. Moreover, any efforts to achieve regional cooperation will be meaningless and ineffective unless accompanied by tangible progress in the peace process on all its tracks.

We are greatly concerned about the issue of Jerusalem — Al-Quds Al-Sharif — which is at the heart of the Arab-Israeli conflict and is of utmost concern to the Arab and Muslim world. The manner in which this issue is dealt with could determine the future of the peace process. We regret to see the Israeli authorities continue their measures aimed at changing the demographic composition and creating new realities in the status of Jerusalem with the intention of prejudicing the negotiations on the final status of the city. We believe that in any settlement of this issue Israel must take into consideration internationally binding resolutions legality,

in particular Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), which calls on Israel to withdraw from occupied Arab territories, and 252 (1968) pertaining to Al-Quds Al-Sharif. We also believe that any settlement should take into account the importance of the repatriation of Palestinian refugees and the release of Palestinian prisoners who have been detained in violation of the Declaration of Principles, international law and the Geneva Conventions.

The honourable and firm stand taken by the international community following the brutal Iraqi aggression against the State of Kuwait in 1990, including the adoption of a series of historic Security Council resolutions to repel the aggression and restore to the State of Kuwait its legitimacy and sovereignty, constitutes the kind of firmness we hope the United Nations will always demonstrate. The position of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on this issue is unwavering, and is based on two fundamental principles. So long as the Iraqi Government has not fully complied with the internationally binding demands set out in Council resolutions, the problem will not be solved and the suffering of the Iraqi people will not be mitigated. This is a matter of deep concern for all of us.

We believe that recent developments in northern Iraq could have adverse effects on the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq, since certain neighbouring countries have in various ways attempted to interfere in the Kurdish conflict. In the light of these realities, we have to be very careful lest the situation lead to a collapse of the international coalition which is responsible for full implementation of all relevant Security Council resolutions, the foremost of which relate to the release and repatriation of all prisoners of war and detainees from Kuwait and other countries, the return of stolen assets, compliance with the mechanism for compensation, and full cooperation with the efforts of the United Nations Special Commission to oversee the elimination of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. These are the objectives the international coalition should strive to fulfil, bearing in mind the need to avoid any measures that might damage the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq.

Mr. Agathocleous (Cyprus), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The Government of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques expressed great interest in efforts to eliminate all weapons of mass destruction from the Middle East, including those aimed at keeping that sensitive part of the world free of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. In this perspective, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia actively

participated in the Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) held in New York last year, and welcomed the efforts that have led to an agreement on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

We believe in the need to make the NPT more effective and universal through the activation of the safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency. We also see a need to adopt measures and criteria that would enhance all aspects of the process of dismantling weapons of mass destruction in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1 (I), which addresses, *inter alia*, the issue of eliminating all weapons of mass destruction. In this respect, we urge all States that have not yet become parties to the Treaty to take the necessary steps to do so, thus contributing to the maintenance of world peace and stability.

The occupation by the Islamic Republic of Iran of three islands belonging to the United Arab Emirates — Abu Musa, Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb — is a source of great concern, not only to the United Arab Emirates, but also to the States of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) as a whole, which desire the best possible relations with their neighbour, Iran. We have repeatedly urged the Islamic Republic of Iran to respond to the call of the United Arab Emirates to settle this long-standing problem peacefully through serious bilateral negotiations. Consequently, we reiterate our call upon the Government of Iran to cease imposing a status quo by force and to halt preparations for unilateral construction on any of the three islands. Furthermore, we also call upon the Government of Iran to initiate efforts to resolve this dispute peacefully in accordance with the norms and principles of international law, including the referral of this matter to the International Court of Justice. In view of the persistence of the conflict, the Security Council should place this issue on its agenda.

Based on the determination of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to maintain the security and stability of the Arabian Gulf region, we support the wise actions of the State of Bahrain to foster its security and stability. These actions were approved and supported by the GCC and the League of Arab States, since the security of the State of Bahrain is part and parcel of the security of the GCC States.

Nearly 10 months have passed since the signing of the Dayton Agreement, which brought an end to the violence and destruction that accompanied the Serb

aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina. This Agreement did not materialize until the international community expressed sufficient will and firmness to stem the Serb aggression. We hope that the recent elections will mark a new beginning and a new future of peace, stability and economic development for the country. Nonetheless, we must point out that the peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina will remain fragile until it takes root. The reconstruction of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the international support necessary to help it address the problems resulting from years of war should be viewed as conditions of peace without which the goals of the Dayton Agreement can never be realized. It is also important to emphasize the need to apprehend and bring to justice the perpetrators of crimes against humanity and to ban them from any political office in the future. Their apprehension is an international responsibility that should not be taken lightly. It is also incumbent upon the international community to confront any attempt to divide the country along ethnic or religious lines.

Helping Bosnia and Herzegovina set out on the road to peace early this year was the first of a series of positive developments in many troubled areas of the world. We hope that the recent announcement of an agreement between the Government of the Philippines and the Moro National Liberation Front will mark the end of confrontation between the Philippine authorities and their Muslim minority after a long period of tension and conflict.

As for the conflict in Chechnya, we hope the current truce and reports of the Russian Government's intention to withdraw its forces from the area will pave the way for a resolution of this crisis.

Unfortunately, the statuses of other conflicts have not changed. The Pakistani-Indian dispute over Jammu and Kashmir is still tense and complicated. There is no alternative to following the peaceful path based on the resolutions of the United Nations guaranteeing the people of Jammu and Kashmir the exercise of their right to self-determination.

The situation in Somalia remains desperate. The country is awaiting a decision by the clan leaders on a process to save the country and its people. We urge all factions to put aside their differences and shoulder their national responsibilities by forming a national authority representing the different factions of the Somali people in order to restore unity, stability and security to that country.

In Afghanistan — in spite of all the sincere efforts of the United Nations and all the good offices of the Government of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques to achieve national reconciliation in that country — the fighting still rages between the different factions as a result of disagreements between their leaders. This has prevented the country from enjoying the fruits of its victory against foreign occupation.

The issue of international terrorism was the main topic throughout last year. Many conferences and workshops addressed ways and means of confronting this growing phenomenon, which has become a source of grave concern for the international community. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, recognizing the need to confront and address this serious phenomenon, has voiced its support for all international efforts to confront this problem. This position was illustrated collectively in the statement issued by the Gulf Cooperation Council following its last session. The GCC States have emphasized that extremism, violence and terrorism are global phenomena that are not limited to a specific people or region and have unambiguously denounced and condemned all forms of violence and terrorism. They also expressed their support for all international efforts aimed at preventing and combating terrorism, including denying safe haven to terrorists anywhere and making efforts to apprehend, convict and severely punish those involved in such crimes.

A cursory review of world economic problems and the role of the United Nations in overseeing international economic cooperation shows that the success of the United Nations in dealing with economic issues and promoting international development has also been tied to the commitment of Member States to the United Nations Charter.

Although the international community has succeeded, by dint of serious negotiations, in resolving many difficult problems and has achieved important results in many sensitive areas through the establishment of the World Trade Organization, we are still concerned by the continuing practice of trade protectionism, which runs counter to our belief in the importance of allowing market forces to play their natural role in economic affairs. It is also necessary to free international trade from certain restrictions, such as that of using the pretext of protecting the environment as a justification for protectionist measures. Such restrictions undermine the economies of developing nations and have a negative

impact on their development, which is the cornerstone of their peace and stability.

The Secretary-General has taken a commendable initiative in this direction with his "An Agenda for Development", which, given concerted effort, could become a realistic tool for enhancing global economic and social development. Here, the developed countries in particular bear a special responsibility for building fruitful cooperation to the benefit all countries, rich and poor. We believe that an increase in the amount of assistance provided by developed to developing countries is a cornerstone of such hoped-for cooperation.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, a founding Member of the international Organization and a signatory of the San Francisco Charter, is eager to have the United Nations continue to play its leadership role in strengthening collective security. It reaffirms its responsibilities as a founding Member of the Organization. This reaffirmation was reiterated in a speech by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Fahd Bin Abdul-Aziz, which was delivered on his behalf by His Royal Highness Prince Sultan Bin Abdul-Aziz, Second Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence and Aviation, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations. Today, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia takes this opportunity to reconfirm its continued commitment to achieving the objectives of the United Nations Charter. It will spare no effort to enhance the capabilities of the United Nations in order to achieve justice and to promote security, stability and prosperity throughout our troubled world.

The Holy Koran provides us with guidance to lead us towards creative actions, as exemplified in the following verse:

"And say: 'Work righteousness.
Soon will God observe your work,
And His Apostle, and the Believers.'"
(*The Holy Koran, IX:105*)

The Acting President: The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Mauritania, His Excellency Mr. Lemrabott Sidi Mahmoud Ould Cheikh Ahmed.

Mr. Lemrabott (Mauritania)(*interpretation from Arabic*): I should like to convey to the President, on behalf of my delegation, my warm congratulations on his election to the presidency of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. We are convinced that his personal qualities,

experience and great skill are our best guarantee for the success of this session and will enable us to achieve positive results.

I should also like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude and esteem to Mr. Freitas do Amaral, President of the fiftieth session, who so ably guided the work of the Assembly last year.

I should also like once again to extend our entire confidence to our brother, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, and to express to him our thanks for the great efforts he has tirelessly expended since shouldering his heavy responsibilities in strengthening the universality and credibility of the United Nations and enhancing its capacity to play its rightful role, notwithstanding particularly difficult international circumstances.

It is gratifying to note that, as the Organization enters into its second 50 years of life, substantial progress is being made on the road to peace throughout the world.

Thus, East-West confrontation, more commonly known as the cold war, has ended and the spectre of the balance of terror has disappeared, giving way to dialogue and cooperation in the establishment and maintenance of world peace and security. Other important steps have also been taken towards decolonization, the eradication of racial discrimination and the full exercise by peoples of their right to self-determination.

We must, however, note that these achievements, valuable as they are, have not contributed significantly to improving the situation in many parts of the world where, in some countries, there are still hotbeds of tension and bloody wars. Nor have they sufficed to eliminate the poverty and underdevelopment that are still the daily lot of a large proportion of the inhabitants of our planet.

Thus, developing countries continue to suffer the combined effects of the world economic crisis and the ongoing deterioration of terms of trade and to bear the burden of an external debt that exhausts their resources at the very time that official development assistance is constantly decreasing.

The past year has seen no important improvement in the world economic situation. That conclusion is unavoidable, since the current economic crisis has as its basis the inequity inherent in the world economy, an

inequity whose major consequences are macroeconomic imbalance, unfair terms of trade and inequality in the distribution of wealth.

In this framework, the African continent is obviously the hardest hit by the negative effects of the deterioration in economic conditions owing to the burden of its external debt and the fall in the prices of the raw materials that make up the principal source of income for most African countries.

The Sahel region is among those on our continent that is suffering the most from this situation, especially given the chronic drought from which it has suffered for over three decades and that has weakened and sometimes destroyed the economies of its component countries.

However, we are gratified by the increased interest shown in recent years with regard to African development and we welcome the System-wide Special Initiative for Africa launched by the Secretary-General, which we would like to see implemented as soon as possible.

The consolidation of democracy and the construction of a State based on the rule of law and respect for human rights are positive results of the activities of the international community, as reflected in the resolutions of the United Nations and its specialized agencies as well as in the decisions and recommendations handed down by several conferences organized under United Nations auspices or with its support. This confirms the importance of the collective effort of the United Nations and should encourage the Organization to continue its pursuit of the noble objectives of mankind.

In that connection, and in order to enable the United Nations to strengthen such action, it is particularly urgent and essential to work on the restructuring of its organs, the rationalization of its working methods and the improvement in its performance.

To that end, my country supports the proposals designed to give renewed dynamism to the Economic and Social Council, to end duplication in its subsidiary bodies and to improve its rules of operation. We also support proposals aimed at enlarging representation in the Security Council in keeping with the requirements of democracy, transparency and equity.

We also believe that the principle of equality among Member States should be the basis for any action undertaken to restructure the Security Council, which,

according to Article 24 of the United Nations Charter, acts on behalf of all Member States. This means that the Council has an obligation to reflect the universal character of the United Nations.

Allow me to say a word about the democratic process in Mauritania, the first phase of which began 10 years ago in 1986 with the first local elections and was followed by the adoption of the 1991 Constitution. Pluralistic, multi-party presidential and parliamentary elections followed in 1992 and the second round of local elections in 1994. This process is being strengthened once again by the holding on 11 October of the second round of legislative elections in a free and transparent climate. Two hundred and sixty-nine candidates, most from 13 political parties, will appeal to the voters for the 79 seats of the National Assembly. All provisions have been made to ensure that this election takes place under the best conditions.

With this new achievement, the Mauritanian people will confirm that it has become, as stated by His Excellency President Maaouya Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya, "the source of sovereignty and legality" and the master of its own destiny and affairs.

Having won the struggle for democracy and achieved the institution of the rule of law and the guarantee of all individual and collective rights, Mauritania is engaged in another, equally determined struggle against economic and social underdevelopment. In this regard, many economic reform programmes have been implemented since 1985 within the framework of a liberal policy incorporating all development dimensions and designed to raise the living standards of citizens and making basic services available to them.

These reforms have allowed us to reinvigorate public finances, overcome inflation and restore continued growth. Many projects have also been carried out in the areas of communications, transportation infrastructure, village electrification, expanded water-supply networks and increased health-care coverage. Let me express our appreciation to all of the brotherly and friendly countries, institutions and non-governmental organizations that have supported my country's efforts towards these goals and thank them for the aid they have provided and continue to provide.

Strengthening democracy and economic and social development requires the consolidation of peace and security both for States and individuals. We must

therefore note the striking paradox, despite the end of the cold war and new hopes for peace and justice, of the re-emergence of terrorism, instability and the proliferation of hotbeds of tension around the world.

The Middle East is one region where, unfortunately, this paradox is most alarming. My country, renewing its full support for the peace process, remains convinced that Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) and the principle of "land for peace", adopted at the Madrid Conference, remain the bases for any comprehensive, just and lasting peace in that region.

We also believe that there can be no real solution to the Middle East problem as long as Israel has not withdrawn from all the occupied Palestinian territories, including the Holy Arab City of Al-Quds, the Golan and southern Lebanon.

We had therefore welcomed the new era that seemed to have emerged with the signing on 13 September 1993 of the Declaration of Principles on the autonomy of Gaza and Jericho and other positive advances that followed, especially the 1994 Cairo agreement, the peace Agreement between Israel and Jordan, and the Taba Agreement on the implementation of the second phase of the Declaration of Principles, signed in Washington on 28 September 1995. We had hoped that the Palestinian people will soon see the end of its tragedy by recovering its legitimate right to self-determination and to establish its independent State on its territory.

On this basis, and in order to ensure the continuation of the peace process, the concluded Agreements must be implemented and commitments undertaken must be honoured. Negotiations must resume among all the concerned parties on the basis of the principles arrived at and accepted by all and in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions. My country also insists on the need to lift the embargo imposed on the brotherly Palestinian people, the devastating consequences of which on the fledgling Palestinian economy and the repercussions of which on security in the Palestinian territories could endanger the peace process.

Finally, we invite the two sponsors of the peace process to assume fully their responsibilities in order to allow the people of the region to recover their legitimate rights and to open a new chapter in the history of this subregion, so that its potential can be put to the service of economic development and social advancement.

Nearby, the aftermath of the Gulf War continues to raise obstacles to the normalization of the situation in that region. In this regard, my country has always affirmed and wishes to reaffirm today its dedication to respect for international legality and the United Nations resolutions pertaining to the Gulf War and its consequences. We reiterate our rejection of any threat to the independence of Kuwait and its territorial integrity and we call for the settlement of the question of Kuwaiti prisoners.

We also reaffirm our consistent position of rejecting any action threatening the unity of fraternal Iraq and the integrity of its territory. We call for the lifting of the embargo imposed on the Iraqi people, which is subjecting them to famine and disease. In this regard, my country wishes to see implemented, as soon as possible, Security Council resolution 986 (1995) on the issue of oil for food. We also wish to express our rejection of the plan being entertained by some of Iraq's neighbours to create a safe area in northern Iraq, in contradiction to their declared dedication to territorial integrity and unity and in violation of the principles and rules of international law and the United Nations Charter.

My country believes that the United Arab Emirates has the inalienable right to recover its full and complete sovereignty over the islands of Abu Musa, Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb. We reiterate our support for the United Arab Emirates in its endeavours to recover its rights by all available means.

In the Arab Maghreb, the question of Western Sahara is a consistent source of great concern because of its threat to stability and security in the subregion. My country also believes that the United Nations, and the Security Council in particular, should, now more than ever, assume its full responsibility for the implementation of the settlement plan, in keeping with resolutions adopted to that end on the holding of a free and impartial referendum that will make it possible to achieve a comprehensive and definitive solution to the question of Western Sahara and to ensure security and stability in the region. For our part, we continue to be prepared to contribute positively to the achievement of that aim.

With regard to the embargo that for several years has affected the Libyan people, my country wishes to see greater receptivity to Libya's obvious willingness to cooperate with the United Nations and other concerned parties, in seeking a solution to the crisis between it and certain western countries. We call for the lifting of this embargo — which is hurting the Libyan people and all

the peoples of the Maghreb — and hope that the proposal of the League of Arab States, which enjoys broad support, will open up new opportunities to put an end to it.

With regard to security and stability, Africa continues to face major problems. Conflicts are spreading death, famine and epidemic throughout the continent. In Somalia, the war continues to leave a train of death and destruction and the international community, despite the solidarity it has shown in the past through its involvement, no longer evinces much interest in a situation that is threatening the Somali people. We hope the Somali people will overcome their differences and find a way to conduct a constructive dialogue.

In Liberia, we hope that the peace process will continue, in keeping with the Abuja Agreement, and we reiterate our support for the decisions taken by the ministerial ad hoc Committee of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) at its seventh session and the decisions and recommendations of the last two summits of the Organization of African Unity and ECOWAS on Liberia, so that peace and harmony may return to that fraternal country.

We hope that our Rwandan and Burundian brothers will, in their countries, resolve their conflicts and seek dialogue and understanding in solving their problems. We also hope that they will be able to face the challenges of development and devote to it the energies now being devoted to their differences.

With regard to Bosnia and Herzegovina, my country expresses satisfaction at the important advances made along the road to peace, especially the recent democratic elections. We reaffirm also the need to continue implementation of the Dayton Agreement and to see the international community exert the necessary effort for the reconstruction of that country, whose infrastructure has been destroyed and whose people have suffered the most horrifying forms of aggression.

The United Nations must adapt to the world as it is and to the changes it undergoes. The Islamic Republic of Mauritania wishes to reiterate its willingness and commitment to work in concert with other Member States towards the realization of the noble goals of our Organization, in particular the consolidation of peace and security in the world.

At a time when most third-world countries are facing enormous challenges that hamper their advance towards

greater progress and prosperity, and while our planet is facing environmental challenges that threaten the future of all life on Earth, considerable resources are being devoted to the production, refinement and acquisition of weapons of mass destruction of all kinds, while official development assistance continues to decline.

In this respect we hope that the recent Treaty prohibiting nuclear tests will be one important step along the way to complete and general disarmament, the only way to free up the necessary resources for the development of the third world.

Today, more than half a century after the creation of our Organization, we must be fully aware of our common destiny. We must dedicate ourselves to promoting mutually advantageous international cooperation and bringing about effective solidarity equal to the challenges we face to ensure a better future for all humankind.

My country, as in the past, will continue to work towards the strengthening of friendly and brotherly relations among all peoples and nations in the pursuit of the noble ideals aspired to by the founding fathers of the United Nations.

The Acting President: I now call on the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica, His Excellency Mr. Seymour Mullings.

Mr. Mullings (Jamaica): May I, on behalf of the delegation of Jamaica, convey to Mr. Razali Ismail our warmest congratulations on his election as President of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. In so doing we pay tribute to his country, Malaysia, which is linked to Jamaica by close ties of friendship and collaboration and which continues to play a prominent role in international affairs. I would assure him of the full support and cooperation of the Jamaican delegation in the deliberations on the many important issues before us.

I should like to congratulate your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, for the able manner in which he guided the work of the fiftieth session. Let me also express appreciation to the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for his untiring efforts to promote peace and development.

There are many who, with good reason, approach this fifty-first session with a sense of despair and deep concern about the future of the United Nations and the vital mission that it must undertake on behalf of the peoples of the world. They look back at the promises and the pledges made during the fiftieth anniversary celebrations and try to reconcile these lofty messages with the continuing crisis being faced by this body and the difficulties confronting the multilateral system.

Rather than dwelling on the missed opportunities and the difficulties that have confronted us, my delegation would wish for this Assembly to recognize the imperative need for effective global action in the pursuit of the goals of international peace and security, economic and social well-being, and justice for all. In so doing, we must all reaffirm our commitment to the principles on which the United Nations is based. Our Prime Minister, P. J. Patterson, and other world leaders joined in renewing the collective commitment to these principles at last year's Special Commemorative Meeting.

The fundamental goal of the United Nations is the achievement and preservation of international peace and security. We have witnessed in recent times the end of the cold war and the dramatic reduction in East-West tensions. At the same time, we have witnessed the tragic emergence of horrific levels of ethnic tension, regional instability and intra-State upheavals, which have threatened international peace and security. These have severely tested the mettle of the United Nations system and the community of nations as a whole.

The challenges to peacemakers and peacekeepers in this period have been many. We must, today, recognize the successes that have been achieved through combined multilateral and regional action in the spirit of the Charter. A functioning multilateral system should work effectively to restrain aggression and the exercise of military power. We must resist tendencies towards unilateralism which are unhealthy and negative signs for the international system. We must insist that the established mechanisms for conflict resolution and decision-making in relation to issues of multilateral security are upheld.

Jamaica and sister nations of the Caribbean joined the international community in mounting a United Nations Mission in Haiti that brought an end to the wanton violence and the tragedies at sea that characterized the period of military dictatorship in that country.

The return of democracy has brought renewed hope, opportunity and optimism to the people of Haiti. These sentiments can be sustained only if we continue to help the Government and people of Haiti to overcome the obstacles that still confront them in this quest. It is important that the United Nations Support Mission in Haiti be given the means necessary to enable it to meet its objectives. It is even more critical that the international community commit itself to providing the technical and financial resources necessary to assist Haiti to achieve economic and social development.

The nations of the Caribbean seek to maintain a climate free of tension and confrontation. We seek the normalization of relations, which will reduce the atmosphere of uncertainty and the dangers of confrontation in the region. We seek this in an atmosphere of respect for sovereign rights and a commitment to the peaceful settlement of disputes. We reject the extra-territorial application of national legislation, which is inconsistent with international law.

Within the wider Caribbean, we continue to pursue the goal of regional integration through the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Association of Caribbean States. It is our objective to achieve the creation of a Caribbean zone of peace and cooperation. We are united by a common determination to remove the barriers that divide us and to protect the precious natural heritage that we share. For this we have to engage the active participation of all countries in the region.

We wish to commend the efforts of African Governments and the Organization of African Unity to overcome the grave difficulties that Africa has been experiencing. We particularly welcome the initiative for a conference on peace, security and stability in the African Great Lakes region. We can only hope that, through a comprehensive approach, lasting solutions can be found to the situations in Burundi and Rwanda. We reiterate our strong support for the efforts of the international community to implement the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s and the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa.

We are encouraged by recent events in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which have paved the way for elections in that country, and look forward to the restoration of stability and a harmonious relationship among its people.

We support the position that the Middle East peace process should be consolidated and proceed on the basis of the principles already agreed and accepted by all parties. There should be no turning back. Peace is attainable if the parties approach negotiations in a spirit of accommodation and compromise, and recognize their common interest in ensuring stability and mutual respect for each other's rights. We hope that the talks, which begin today at the invitation of President Clinton, will lead to a speedy agreement among the parties.

While the United Nations must focus critical attention on the crises caused by conflict and violent confrontation, it must never lose sight of the root cause of instability and tension — poverty, deprivation, hunger and disease. It is in the depth of human misery that the swords of anger and division are most quickly unsheathed. A commitment to the goals of peace and security is meaningless without a commitment to fostering sustained economic growth and sustainable development, and to waging war on poverty and human misery.

The emerging global economic environment gives us cause for both optimism and grave anxiety. Phenomenal economic growth in a few countries is contrasted with decline and stagnation in the majority. An increasingly affluent world coexists with a huge and marginalized underclass. This polarization is reflected both internally and externally.

A failure to address inequities can and will inevitably lead to what the 1996 Human Development Report so graphically describes on page 8 as

“a world gargantuan in its excesses and grotesque in its human and economic inequalities.”

For many low-income countries that lack adequate access to development capital and other resources, official development assistance remains a critical but diminishing source of support. Moreover, the problem of external debt is also a burden for many of these countries. Agreed arrangements have proved inadequate in alleviating debt burdens, and alternate strategies still have to be found.

It is against this background that Jamaica continues to insist that achieving sustained economic growth and sustainable development must remain a priority objective of the global agenda. In the series of global conferences ending recently with the Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), Governments

demonstrated their ability to collaborate in analyzing socio-economic and environmental problems.

Taken together, these conferences represent deliberate efforts to define a framework for development cooperation and multilateral commitments. These global forums have raised the level of awareness of development issues. We should now not allow inertia to take over. It is essential, therefore, that we honour the commitments and meet the internationally agreed targets emanating from these conferences. Their success depends on political will and the provision of adequate resources to ensure follow-up and implementation.

The 1997 special session devoted to the assessment and review of the implementation of Agenda 21 and the results of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio will provide an ideal opportunity for the international community to assess progress in carrying out the agreed commitments.

For small island developing countries, the review process is of great significance, and we hope it will provide the momentum fully to implement the Barbados Programme of Action.

Governments, including my own, have created their own framework for implementation at the national level. Jamaica has embraced the concept of sustainable development, and our policies have been oriented towards achieving these goals.

The main challenge faced by small island developing States is to find the resources to develop a programme that is designed to reduce the vulnerability of their economies and generate economic growth and development. This envisages a systematic approach to the categorization of island developing countries by specialization or socio-economic performance.

The Uruguay Round agreements, on which the World Trade Organization is founded, provide the framework for a liberalized multilateral trading system.

Many developing countries are unlikely to benefit in the short term from the Uruguay Round agreements. Structurally weak and vulnerable developing countries require favourable arrangements and equitable terms and conditions to enable them to make the necessary adjustments to participate successfully in world trade.

Free trade must never be viewed as an end in itself; it must be a vehicle for development. It is for this reason that the World Trade Organization recognizes the need for special and differential treatment for developing countries and waivers for special trading regimes. This must be respected in both letter and spirit.

We are of the firm view that no action should be taken to erode our vital interests or remove equitable and long-standing arrangements that affect the very economic survival of some developing countries. In this context, I refer to the current action by a coalition of powerful special interests with respect to the special terms enjoyed by a number of developing countries through their arrangements with the European Union. It has been made abundantly clear that the removal of preferences would have a serious negative impact on the economies of Jamaica and other Caribbean countries.

My delegation therefore calls upon those who would seek to use the World Trade Organization as an instrument to attack the very foundation of the economies of small developing States to desist from this course of action. The thoughtless assault upon the Lomé Banana Protocol is of great concern to my country and to sister Caribbean banana producers, which stand to suffer economic devastation if the selfish acts of these powerful interests are allowed to succeed.

The trend towards globalization is irreversible, but not all of us are capable of making the adjustments necessary in the short term to cope with its consequences. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has an important role to play in assisting developing countries to meet the challenges brought about by globalization and liberalization and to facilitate their integration in the world trading system. In this regard, we welcome the renewed vigour of this body, as exemplified at the ninth session of UNCTAD, where Governments reaffirmed the relevance of UNCTAD's mandate as the focal point for dealing with trade and related development issues.

It is necessary to examine and assess the United Nations system and its capacity to respond to political and humanitarian emergencies. The United Nations must begin to link peace-keeping and peacemaking in a more coherent and consistent manner. We note the work in this regard taking place in the Assembly's Informal Open-ended Working Group on an Agenda for Peace. We recognize the need for a rapidly deployable unit and support the efforts to put this in place.

An important step was taken in the field of disarmament recently with the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Jamaica regards the CTBT as an incremental step and looks forward to the next stage, which is the adoption of a programme to achieve the ultimate goal of complete nuclear disarmament. Those States with nuclear capabilities have a responsibility to carry out their obligations in good faith not only in regard to nuclear testing, but also with respect to non-proliferation.

The problem of drug abuse and illicit traffic in narcotics continues to pose a serious threat to society. The extent of drug abuse and drug trafficking shows that it transcends national and geographic boundaries. National commitment and international cooperation are therefore required to address this problem. It is against this background that Jamaica strongly supports the convening of a special session of the General Assembly in 1998 to address the illicit trafficking in and use of drugs. At the same time, we must recognize the impact of related criminal activity, which is spawned by the illicit drug trade. Of particular concern is the nexus between drug trafficking and trafficking in arms and high-powered weapons. We urge those States that are producers of these arms to be more vigilant in enforcing control over their distribution and illegal export.

Since we met last year, significant developments have occurred with regard to the implementation of the Convention on the Law of the Sea. With the completion of elections to the various institutions of the authority, the International Seabed Authority is now operational. We congratulate Secretary-General Mr. Satya Nandan on his election and express our confidence that his leadership and guidance will enable the Authority to discharge its mandate. It is vital that adequate resources be provided in order to ensure that the Authority becomes firmly established.

We also take this opportunity to welcome the historic election on 1 August of the members of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea. We look forward to the inauguration of the Tribunal in its host city of Hamburg later this month. This will be another landmark in the process of the implementation of the Convention on the Law of the Sea.

We should note the tremendous achievements of the United Nations in the progressive development of international law. A significant number of instruments have been concluded that provide the legal underpinnings

of the multilateral system. It is a dynamic process which is helping to bring more order to international relations. The creation of an international criminal court is among the latest initiatives on which substantive work has been done. Jamaican experts have participated actively in the progressive development of international law. We are ready to contribute further to the machinery of the international legal system.

To respond to a multitude of challenges, the United Nations needs to be renewed and revitalized. There is a strongly shared perception that we must proceed expeditiously with the task of bringing about the much-needed reform of the United Nations system in the collective interest. The initiative to restructure and improve performance, productivity and the cost-effectiveness of the United Nations system is an important one. The adoption of resolution 50/227 — which contains further measures for the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations system in the economic, social and related fields — is evidence of the efforts to improve the operational aspects of the work of the system. Jamaica is committed to working with other Member States throughout this session of the General Assembly to continue the process of strengthening the Organization.

The persistence of disputes and conflicts suggests the need for strengthening the United Nations machinery for dealing with these problems. The Security Council, which under the Charter of the United Nations holds the mandate for the maintenance of international peace and security, has an important and strategic role to play in the process. As we all know, aspects of its composition and role are currently under review. Certainly, it is acknowledged that we should be moving in the direction of greater democratization and increased participation by Member States in critical decisions affecting the international community. The expansion of the membership of the United Nations and the significant changes in the political and economic conditions in Member States must surely be important factors in determining changes in the composition of the Council and the status of its members.

Jamaica is not committed to any rigid formula for change, but whatever formula is arrived at should satisfy the need for democratic participation consistent with the sovereign equality of States and with the equitable distribution of seats. The need for reform should be matched by increased political will to use the machinery of the United Nations for the peaceful settlement of disputes and to cooperate with conciliation efforts under the auspices of the Secretary-General.

Reform must not be for its own sake. The purpose of reform must be to strengthen the capacity to deliver responsive and responsible leadership on questions of peace and security, socio-economic development, human rights and environmental protection.

We understand and support the need for reform of the administrative and management process in the system, but what we cannot accept are unilateral actions to force reform by withholding assessed contributions to the United Nations. This has brought the Organization to the brink of insolvency and is hampering the very efforts being made for reform and restructuring. More critical are the serious consequences for the development programmes of the United Nations.

The current crisis will not be resolved until Member States pay their arrears and assessed contributions promptly and without conditions. At the same time, we recognize the need to examine carefully the existing formula for contributions. The establishment of any new formula must be based on the principles of equity and the capacity of Member States to pay.

The agenda of issues before us at this session shows that there is a great deal to be done. In many areas, we have made progress, even if it has been slow. It is essential that we continue to make the effort, through discussion, debate and negotiation, to find solutions that remove from our world the threats of war and conflict and the pain of poverty and misery. Through our joint efforts we can make progress, reach compromises and arrive at solutions that will make our world safer and give each and every one of us a greater stake in the future.

The Acting President: The next speaker is the Secretary of the General People's Committee for Foreign Liaison and International Cooperation of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, His Excellency Mr. Omar Mustafa Muntasser.

Mr. Muntasser (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*interpretation from Arabic*): It gives me great pleasure to congratulate Mr. Razali Ismail on his election as President of this session of the General Assembly. His assumption of that high post is a tribute to him personally and to his country, Malaysia, with which my country has good relations and close ties enhanced by bonds of friendship and cooperation. My delegation is confident that his political experience and diplomatic skill will help us in achieving a successful session. He has taken over

the presidency from his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Diego Freitas do Amaral of Portugal. I should like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to him for the way he conducted the affairs of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly.

Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali has shown great skill in conducting the affairs of the Organization by virtue of his long experience, his wide knowledge of world affairs and his grasp of the substance of regional conflicts. That is why he enjoys our full support in continuing at the helm of the Organization. Since he enjoys worldwide support, as expressed by several regional organizations, we are confident that the Assembly will support his reelection to the post of Secretary-General of the Organization so that he may continue the process he started in the field of restructuring and strengthening the United Nations and enhancing its role to enable it fully to shoulder its responsibilities in realizing the purposes of the Charter, namely, the establishment of peace, justice and equality and the promotion of development.

This session is convened in the aftermath of important events and in the midst of vast developments. The Fourth World Conference on Women achieved good results. Attempts are being made to overcome economic difficulties, promote development, and eliminate phenomena that threaten the environment.

It is a good omen that this session is starting at a time when optimism is rising as a result of the progress achieved in settling the dispute in the Balkans. But if satisfaction at such happy developments has been widespread, concern has deepened over the persistence of chronic disturbances and the eruption of destructive civil wars. To confront these events, which threaten international peace and security, the international community must exert greater effort to contain such disturbances and wars.

In this context, it is essential to remove the obstacles hampering the implementation of peace agreements in Angola and Liberia. A definitive solution must be implemented for the ethnic disputes in Rwanda and Burundi. The brotherly people of Somalia continue to suffer from long-standing problems. They expect our support for a reconciliation that would meet the needs of all Somalis and respond to their hopes and aspirations. An end should be put to the suffering of the brotherly people of Iraq by lifting the sanctions, maintaining the unity and territorial integrity of Iraq and desisting from premeditated

attempts to impinge on its sovereignty and its freedom in decision-making.

My country is extremely concerned at the latest developments in Iraq. The United States aggression against Iraq is a violation of its sovereignty and an interference in its internal affairs. We have confirmed and confirm again today that Iraq has the right to territorial integrity and to exercise sovereignty over its entire territory. For the United States of America to consider that Iraq's exercise of its sovereign rights constitutes aggression, at a time when Iraq is being subjected to United States aggression, is reverse logic that must be denounced and condemned by the international community.

The conflict in the Middle East, with the question of Palestine at its core, has been among the priority issues at the United Nations for more than half a century. Now, despite all the talk about the peace process, the fact remains that the Palestinian people continue to be displaced from their homeland. Those who remain are oppressed by the Israelis by collective siege and random deportation, in total disregard of international denunciation of such practices and in complete defiance of the international will, which supports the legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people and calls for respect for international decisions calling for the full realization of all the rights of the Palestinian people, in particular their right to return to their homeland and their right to self-determination.

As we have seen ever since the usurpation of the land of Palestine by the Israelis, the fact is that occupation and expansion have always been a constant policy to realize Israeli ambitions. Their settlement activities increase daily. Their jails are filled with thousands of prisoners. Houses are demolished for no reason. Rash Israeli statements that the Palestinians have no right to a State of their own are often repeated, along with acts of aggression against southern Lebanon. The Israelis are also perpetuating their occupation of the Syrian Golan. They persevere in the Judaization of Jerusalem, including their designs to demolish the most important Islamic shrine, namely, the Holy Al-Aqsa Mosque.

These Israeli actions prove that the Israelis do not want peace. Their joining the so-called peace process is nothing more than a smoke screen to hide their attempts to impose their will on the Arab nation and make it bow

in submission, thus setting a seal on their occupation and their sense of superiority.

My country has publicly declared that the current so-called peace arrangements will not lead to a genuine and lasting solution. Events have proved the validity of our analysis and the depth of our vision. Just, true and comprehensive peace will not be achieved so long as the Israelis are shedding the blood of the Palestinian people. Peace will not be sustainable under the shadow of Israel's nuclear terrorism and its obstinate denial of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. Peace can come only through the return of the Palestinians to their homeland and the establishment of an independent, democratic State in Palestine, with Holy Jerusalem as its capital and where Palestinian Arabs and Jews would live on an equal footing — similar to what has happened in South Africa. Anything other than that solution would ignore historical facts and lack realism, and would only lead to more bloodshed and keep the area as a pocket of tension where nobody enjoys peace or security.

Five years ago, three western countries — the United States of America, Britain and France — accused Libyan citizens of involvement in the Pan American flight 103 accident and the incident involving the French union de transports aériens (UTA) flight 772. Despite the fact that those who unleashed those accusations never submitted any proof or evidence to support their claims, my country has declared its readiness to uncover all the facts related to the two incidents. We started an investigation of those whom the American and the British authorities claim are involved in the Pan American flight 103 incident.

My country has also called on the authorities in these countries to assist with the investigation. Instead of responding to this request, which falls within the legal framework of the dispute, the three countries have fully politicized the problem, resorted to the Security Council and imposed Council resolution 731 (1992). Despite all this, and out of our keen desire to settle all aspects of the dispute, the Jamahiriya announced its acceptance of that resolution and took practical measures in response to it.

The Jamahiriya has condemned international terrorism in all its forms and has declared its commitment to any measures to be decided by the international community to combat terrorism. Libya's vehement determination to secure the total eradication of terrorism is reflected in the civilized proposal contained in document A/46/840, which calls for the convening of a special session of the General Assembly to study the causes and dimensions of this

phenomenon and devise the means that would eliminate it.

The Jamahiriya has also cooperated with the Government of the United Kingdom in uncovering the elements accused by Britain of involvement in terrorist acts. In the statement, circulated in document S/1995/973 of 20 November 1995, the British informed the Security Council that Libya's answers to their queries about the relationship with the provisional Irish Republic Army were satisfactory and conformed with their expectations.

Furthermore, Libya has cooperated with the French investigating magistrate who visited Libya during the period 5 to 16 July 1996. During that visit, the Libyan authorities provided him with all the facilities he needed to conclude his mission. Later, French statements paid tribute to the positive cooperation of the Libyan authorities with the French magistrate.

The Jamahiriya has proposed several solutions for the trial of the two Libyans suspected of involvement in the United States plane's accident. It has proposed that the two stand trial before a court whose venue should be agreed upon. Libya has also proposed recourse to the International Court of Justice after the United States and Britain refused to apply the Montreal Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against the Safety of Civil Aviation of 1971, despite the fact that both countries are parties to the Convention. Libya has also accepted the proposal submitted by the League of Arab States, which calls for trying the two suspects at the headquarters of the International Court of Justice in The Hague, before Scottish judges and under Scottish law.

These proposed solutions which were either submitted or accepted by the Jamahiriya have been confirmed on more than one occasion and before several forums, including this Assembly. This is a sufficient response to those who claim that Libya refuses to permit the trial of the two suspects, and especially to President Clinton, who said in his statement on 23 September that Libya refuses to surrender the persons responsible for the explosion of Pan American flight 103. Libya has no objection to the two suspects standing trial. The only thing that Libya wants is to guarantee them a neutral and fair trial, free from any media or political influences. We ask this especially because officials in both Britain and the United States, in their statements, have claimed that the two Libyan citizens are guilty and should be punished, indicating that a conviction is pre-ordained before any investigation and before any court appearance.

The Jamahiriya's handling of the dispute has been widely supported internationally and by Arab and African countries. The Organization of the Islamic Conference has declared its solidarity with our position. The Movement of Non-Aligned Countries supported it at Jakarta and reaffirmed that support at Cartagena. It was also strongly supported by the Arab Summit at Cairo. The Organization of African Unity has repeatedly supported it, from the 1993 Cairo Summit through the latest Summit at Yaoundé.

When the three countries were confronted by these positions, which confirmed the firm conviction that Libya has indeed responded to the requirements of Security Council resolutions, they started to drag other issues far removed from the dispute and its context. Both Britain and the United States are trying to evade responsibility for fabricating the problem. They have been attempting to depict the dispute as one between Libya and the international community. Is this not a reversal of the facts? How can the dispute be one between Libya and the international community, when international support is increasing daily for the Libyan position? This support is embodied in the support of regional and international organizations, the population of whose members exceeds two thirds of the world's population.

Those two Governments have now come up with a new lie. They say that Libya is defying international legality. The facts totally refute this. Libya is one of the countries most committed to international law. Proof of this is its implementation of the verdict of the International Court of Justice in its territorial dispute with Chad, even though this was not in our favour. Furthermore, officials in those two countries claim that Libya is not a peace-loving State. This is another lie. The Jamahiriya is a peace-loving country. It believes in peace and practices it. Its role in the peaceful settlement of disputes between States has been embodied in its active role in trying to achieve reconciliation between Sudan and Uganda. It has also been reflected in its successful efforts at reconciling the Philippines and the Moro National Liberation Front.

Raising what has become known as the Lockerbie crisis falls within the context of these false allegations and fabricated accusations. It confirms a fact that we have stated right from the beginning: that this is a premeditated, fabricated problem aimed at punishing the Libyan people for certain principles in which they believe and certain positions they defend. It is as if those who created this crisis were not content with the difficulties and pains which the Libyan people have already suffered at the hands of the colonialists and the fascists who, on our territory, fought

a war that killed and displaced hundreds of thousands of Libyans, and planted in their farms and under their homes millions of land mines which still kill innocent people and impede Libya's efforts to protect the environment, combat desertification, and expand in the fields of economic and social development.

If the aim behind the fabrication of the crisis was not to punish us for certain principles we uphold and certain positions we defend, why did the two countries refuse from the start to apply the relevant international convention — the Montreal Convention? Why did they drag the Security Council into this legal problem, which has nothing whatsoever to do with its functions? Why did they hasten to impose sanctions on us only two months after the start of this crisis? How did these countries accord themselves the right to participate in the voting on Security Council resolution 731 (1992), in contravention of Article 27 (3) of the Charter? Why do the British and American Governments reject any initiative to settle the dispute by dialogue and negotiation? What is the justification for their intransigence in rejecting the proposal of the League of Arab States that was accepted by Libya? Why do these States insist on accusing our citizens when new facts have been uncovered and published in several books and newspapers refuting their claims and confirming that the incident was planned by professional intelligence services to coverup certain suspicious activities? Also, why did these States push the Security Council to adopt a double standard, imposing sanctions on Libya under Chapter VII of the Charter when it did not threaten anybody or in any way compromise international peace and security. At the same time, these countries prevented the Security Council from applying the same Chapter to a major power that sent hundreds of its war planes to attack our country and bomb our cities while their residents lay sleeping in their beds? This same big Power still practises State terrorism against us, freezing our financial assets and imposing unilateral sanctions on us, refusing to respond to General Assembly resolution 41/38, which calls on it to compensate our people for the losses they suffered as a result of its brutal aggression against us in April 1986.

The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya has sought to settle the dispute. All it has asked for is that it be settled in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the rules of international law. My country is satisfied because its handling of this crisis was supported by most countries of the world. And here I would like to pay tribute to the members of the Non-Aligned Movement, the Organization of the Islamic

Conference, the Organization of African Unity and the League of Arab States for their appreciation of our position and their understanding of our earnestness in seeking a quick and just solution. In particular, we would like to thank members of the Security Council who appreciated our response, tried to do us justice and sought to lift the unjust sanctions imposed on us.

The magnitude of the suffering of the Libyan people under the sanctions has been detailed in document S/1996/717. Suffice it to say that the sanctions have so far resulted in the deaths of 3,340 persons in road accidents. More than 12,000 persons have suffered serious permanent injuries because of these accidents. Moreover, the sanctions have cost more than \$18 billion in material losses.

There is no excuse for condoning such injustice, and the continuation of this injustice is wrong. Most countries of the world have repeated their calls for an accelerated solution of the Lockerbie crisis, in accordance with international laws and conventions. The Jamahiriya has accepted that. The obstacle lies in the blind intransigence and illogical demands of the American and British Governments. Should the two Governments persist in their uncompromising positions, refuse to settle the dispute in a spirit of justice and fairness, and relieve the suffering our people have endured for more than four years, the only thing left to the Libyan people would be to appeal to those in this forum with clean consciences to intensify their efforts in order to expose the unjust practices exercised by the United States and Britain to extend the duration of the blockade imposed on a small people. Members of this Assembly should implement the decisions taken by the Heads of State and Government of the Non-Aligned Movement in Cartagena, by the Arab Heads of State at the Cairo summit and by the African Heads of State in the Yaoundé summit not to continue compliance with the sanctions resolutions. They should also consider possible ways of sparing the Libyan people more losses if the western countries persist in rejecting initiatives for a peaceful solution.

The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya attaches the utmost importance to the establishment of security and the enhancement of cooperation in the Mediterranean region. It reaffirms its conviction that stability in this area will be realized only through an end to military exercises in the Mediterranean, the closure of foreign military bases, the withdrawal of foreign fleets and the development of a sound formula, refuting the policy of exclusion, that would enable the Mediterranean countries to contribute to the enhancement of their security and the promotion of

cooperation. By virtue of its distinct location in that region and the stability it enjoys, the Jamahiriya can play an important role in strengthening security in the Mediterranean by reducing migration from the southern coastal States to the North and the elimination of destructive movements that exploit and have been repudiated by Islam for undermining the stability of a number of littoral countries of the Mediterranean. The Jamahiriya would be able to play a bigger role in these fields if the sanctions imposed on it were lifted and external attempts to undermine its security and stability were to stop.

My country supports the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons as a prelude to prohibiting and destroying all weapons of mass destruction. We welcome the international treaties and conventions concluded with a view to controlling these destructive weapons and their ultimate elimination. In particular, my country welcomes the conclusion of the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty. However, we believe that other measures should be taken to guarantee the total eradication of weapons of mass destruction, including a timetable for the destruction of these weapons. It is necessary to take drastic and punitive measures with regard to a major nuclear power that transported nuclear material to its own territory and still procrastinates in disposing of it under international supervision. It is also highly important to formulate an international instrument guaranteeing the security and safety of non-nuclear States. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty recently approved by the General Assembly falls short of the aspirations of the peoples of the world to a total ban on all nuclear tests. As formulated, the Treaty merely perpetuates the status quo. It could even pre-empt efforts aimed at achieving a world totally free from nuclear terror. In the context of other steps that should be taken to eliminate nuclear weapons, it is essential to take serious international measures to guarantee the universality of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

The Jamahiriya has a special interest in this question because the region in which we live is greatly threatened by the fact that the Israelis possess terrifying nuclear weapons with over 200 nuclear warheads. They also have nuclear facilities that they refuse to place under international control. What adds to our concern is the fact that, in addition to the Israeli nuclear terror which threatens the lives of the residents of Arab cities and villages every day, a major nuclear Power not only turns a blind eye to this terror, but even works to develop and enhance it. This same major Power threatens any Arab

country, even if it was merely building a pharmaceutical product factory under the pretext of saving the world from chemical weapons.

The existence of the Israeli nuclear arsenal cannot be taken lightly or condoned. If the international community is truly keen to ensure the security and stability of our region, it should take measures to guarantee Israel's accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the placing of their nuclear facilities under the International Atomic Energy Agency's safeguards system. There must also be a timetable for dismantling their nuclear stockpiles. Should the failure to force Israel to do that continue, it would be legitimate for the countries in the area to acquire, in self-defence, means to guarantee their safety and enable them to face the Israeli nuclear threat to their very existence.

The world has witnessed colossal changes. If we are to adapt to these changes, we must restructure the United Nations to make it better able to respond to international needs and to meet the interests and wishes of Member States.

My country has followed the negotiations aimed at strengthening the United Nations system and at reforming the Security Council. We believe that this process, pursued by Member States for some time now, should be accelerated and concluded, resulting in measures that could enhance the powers of the General Assembly, including on matters of international peace and security.

We urge that the negotiations lead to steps that would enable the Security Council better to carry out its mandate, in conformity with the principles and purposes of the Charter. Any increase in the membership of the Security Council should be based not on a selective approach, but on the principles of the sovereign equality of States and equitable geographic distribution, taking into consideration the interests of the developing countries that constitute the majority of United Nations Member States. The veto privilege, which has become the focus of interest of most countries, should be at the core of the reform process. There is no longer any justification for maintaining this privilege. The new international arena needs a democratic Security Council, not one in which the few enjoy discriminatory rights. My country, which has been in the forefront of those calling for the abrogation of the veto power, once again urges that the measures aimed at reforming the Security Council include arrangements ultimately leading to the elimination of this privilege, which contradicts the principle of sovereign equality of

States and also runs counter to democracy. Preserving it would impede the Organizations's efforts to maintain and preserve international peace and security.

The world cannot be secure until its economic problems and development are addressed. Looking at the international scene, we find that the economies and level of growth of most developing countries continue to languish. It is no exaggeration to state that these conditions may deteriorate further if effective measures are not taken to reverse them. The Charter of the United Nations is anchored on two basic pillars: the maintenance of international peace and security and international cooperation for economic and social development. The close connection between the two pillars requires the United Nations to strive to achieve both equally.

We believe that no sound international economic environment can be possible without a true world partnership for development. This requires that North-South dialogue be resumed and that the developing countries be enabled to participate effectively in making decisions affecting international economic conditions. In this context, commitments for promoting development in developing countries should be undertaken in a realistic manner that would end trade protectionism against the exports of developing countries, lift restrictions on the transfer of technology to them and ensure the payment of remunerative prices for their commodities.

It is essential that special priority be given to the economic situation in Africa and to the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s. The western countries have a moral duty to help end underdevelopment in Africa, given the continent's suffering under colonialism, when its wealth was plundered by these countries, which stole its natural resources and denied it opportunities for development and progress.

As part of the efforts of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya in the areas of economic development, environmental protection, expansion of agrarian reform and the provision of drinking water, the Libyan people, in the midst of their joy at the start of the twenty-eighth year of the 1 September revolution, have celebrated the conclusion of the second phase of the Great Man-Made River Project, whose waters have reached the city of Tripoli, where there is a dense population and arable land. The Libyan people have realized this achievement despite the ongoing embargo and the coercive economic practices imposed on it for over a decade. These

measures were recently tightened by a law whose provisions are applicable to the companies of States that deal with us. This constitutes a flagrant violation of the purposes of the Charter of the United Nations and an intentional disregard for the rules of international law. It is also a clear contradiction of the Agreement establishing the World Trade Organization.

My country has followed with keen interest the reactions of anger and denunciation following the enactment of that law. We would like to express our satisfaction at the inclusion of an item on this matter on the General Assembly's agenda for this session. We hope that member States will discuss this question, study it carefully and ultimately adopt a measure to thwart this law, through which the United States of America is attempting to impose its laws on the international community. This Assembly should take the necessary effective measures to end all coercive economic arrangements being imposed on a number of developing countries, in implementation of the General Assembly resolutions prohibiting any country from enacting extra-territorial laws or resorting to coercive measures to force another country to relinquish the exercise of its sovereign rights.

The next century is but a few years away. Before it begins, all the members of the international community should use the remaining time to eliminate all remnants of recent decades, which were characterized by tension and confrontation. As we enter the third millennium, we should live in a world governed by a system based on justice, equality and respect for the political and economic choices of peoples. Such a system should embody full commitment to international law and the principles and purposes of the United Nations. It must protect and enhance human rights and strengthen efforts aimed at eradicating poverty, suffering, discord, conflicts, disputes and wars. It should be a system in which no country can aspire to hegemony or abuse its influence, a system that supports the peaceful settlement of disputes. It should give all peoples the opportunity to look to the future with optimism.

The United Nations remains the most valid forum and the best tool for building a world consensus in this respect. Let us reform and strengthen this Organization so that it will be able to meet these requirements, all of which emanate from its aims and purposes — the establishment of peace and security, and the promotion of economic and social development in the interests of progress, welfare and prosperity for future generations.

The Acting President: The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, His Excellency Mr. Vahan Papazian.

Mr. Papazian (Armenia): At the outset, I would like to congratulate the President on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session. Given his talent and experience, I am confident that he will guide this session to a successful completion of the noble mission entrusted to it by the Charter of the United Nations.

I would also like to express my appreciation and thanks to his predecessor, Mr. Diogo Freitas Do Amaral, for his outstanding leadership in accomplishing the tasks of the last session.

The end of the cold war has given a decisive impetus to globalization by offering former socialist economies the opportunity to assume their rightful place in the world economy. The challenges posed by extremely rapid transformation are nowhere more graphically depicted than in the current transition of the countries of Eastern and Central Europe and in the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

In addition to severe economic and social problems resulting from the extraordinary changes buffeting the country, the transition process in Armenia has been exacerbated by the transport and energy blockade by neighbouring Azerbaijan, the devastation caused by the massive earthquake of 1988, the conflict between Nagorny-Karabakh and Azerbaijan and the presence of more than 300,000 refugees.

Despite such serious circumstances, economic reforms begun after the declaration of independence in 1991 have been continued and expanded over the past year. Having achieved a fair degree of economic stability, the Government of Armenia has designed a medium-term economic programme for 1996-1998. Armenia's medium-term policy objectives are to maintain financial stability and establish the institutions and mechanisms of a market economy by the end of the programme period in order to lay the foundation for sustainable growth and a viable balance of payments. Consistent with this strategy, the main macroeconomic objectives of the programme are to raise the economic growth rate from 5 per cent in 1995 to 7 per cent in 1998; to lower inflation to 8 per cent by the end of 1998; and to narrow the current account deficit from 26 per cent of the gross domestic product in 1995 to 12 per cent

in 1998. To cope with the social pressures involved in the transition process, the reorientation of social expenditures towards the most vulnerable remains a high-priority task. The programme lays emphasis on improving the targeting of the social safety net and intensifying efforts to rationalize social expenditures.

While each country is responsible for its own economic policies for development, in accordance with its specific situation and conditions, the reactivation of economic growth and development in all countries requires a concerted effort of the international community. Here, particular attention should be given to the needs of the countries with economies in transition, without this affecting development assistance to the developing countries.

The completion of the transition process, the integration of these countries into the world economy and their effective involvement in the multilateral institutions will have a positive impact not only on these countries themselves, but also on the global economy.

As we approach the twenty-first century, it is the collective responsibility of the international community to ensure that, within the multidimensional and integrated character of its mandate, the United Nations system is equipped to show leadership in the fulfilment of the commitments made to international cooperation for development.

In this context, the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for Africa exemplifies the system's commitment to collaborative action and its renewed commitment to supporting Africa's development. Launched last March by the Secretary-General, this Initiative is the largest coordinated action in the history of the United Nations. While it is clear that the implementation of the Initiative will be led at the country level by Governments, the United Nations agencies will hold themselves mutually accountable for achieving this Initiative's goals.

The United Nations, in cooperation with the Bretton Woods institutions, other bodies of the United Nations system, including its specialized agencies, and the World Trade Organization, has a key role in fostering greater coherence, complementarity and coordination in global economic policy-making. The General Assembly should exert greater policy leadership on development issues inasmuch as the Charter of the United Nations provides the Assembly with broad mandates concerning these issues. In accordance with relevant provisions of the Charter, the

Economic and Social Council must continue to strengthen its role as the central mechanism for coordinating the policies and activities of the United Nations, its specialized agencies and funds in the economic, social and related fields. It should provide overall guidance and coordination to the United Nations development system. The Council must also promote a coordinated follow-up to the outcomes of major international conferences.

Recommendations adopted by the Economic and Social Council at its 1996 substantive session on strengthening collaboration between the United Nations and Bretton Woods institutions and on new arrangements for consultations with non-governmental organizations represented a great step forward.

Modern democracy is the political counterpart of the market economic system, and the two go hand in hand. The success of a democracy requires informed and civil discourse and respect for the rule of law and the democratic process, including the expression of the public will through free and fair elections.

The recent, vigorously contested presidential election signalled the vitality of the democratic process in Armenia. President Levon Ter-Petrosian's re-election demonstrates the will of the people in support of the policies pursued thus far by the Government, based on a clear programme and an achievable plan of development.

Development cannot be attained in the absence of respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms. Armenia strongly supports the High Commissioner for Human Rights in his efforts to restructure the Centre for Human Rights. The Member States must continue working towards better coordination within the Centre and consolidation of human-rights functions within the United Nations system.

Armenia considers self-determination in its multitude of manifestations to be an inalienable human right. In this light, the Nagorny Karabakh conflict continues to concern the Government of Armenia and its peaceful resolution remains Armenia's top foreign-policy priority. A few months ago, on 12 May, we marked the second anniversary of the cease-fire in the Nagorny Karabakh conflict. At the same time, the parties to the conflict released all prisoners of war and hostages identified by the International Committee of the Red Cross. We consider these developments encouraging and conducive to the overall peace process and to the establishment of a favourable atmosphere for negotiations.

Negotiations among the parties within the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group on a political agreement continued during the past year. We believe that the signing of the agreement provides the best hope for consolidating the cease-fire and making the peace process irreversible. The elements of the political agreement, and most importantly the security provisions for Nagorny Karabakh, will eventually comprise an inseparable part of any settlement, regardless of the ultimate status of Nagorny Karabakh.

Also this year, the parties took an extra step to establish a second negotiating track through immediate and direct contacts, as mandated by the December 1995 meeting of the OSCE Council of Ministers in Budapest. Thus far, several rounds of talks have taken place between Armenia and Azerbaijan in which general aspects of key issues have been discussed. We are hopeful that the representative of Nagorny Karabakh will join in upcoming rounds, for we strongly believe that no final solution can be achieved without Karabakh's direct participation in the deliberations.

The peaceful resolution of the Karabakh conflict remains Armenia's first priority. Armenia is committed to the talks on both tracks and will remain constructively engaged in both processes. We believe that these two tracks compliment each other and that any progress we make on either can only positively impact the other, ultimately leading to a breakthrough.

During the past five years, Armenia has experienced first hand how war, armed conflict and regional instability in general can hamper economic progress and development. Thus, I would like to reiterate Armenia's commitment to maintaining the existing cease-fire, while eagerly searching for a solution based on good will, mutual compromise and understanding.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction poses a serious threat to both global and regional security and stability. The adoption last month by the General Assembly of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty represented the international community's determination to bring to a completion one of the most sought after non-proliferation and disarmament measures in the history of this Organization. It gave me much satisfaction to sign the Treaty earlier today on behalf of the Government and people of Armenia.

Virtually all States Members of the United Nations favour an increase in the membership of the Security

Council, reflecting the radical changes in the world and the increase in the Organization's overall membership. However, during the discussions in the Open-ended Working Group, wide support has been expressed for the view that, if there is no agreement on other categories of membership, expansion should take place, for the time being, in the non-permanent category alone. Armenia favours an increase in the non-permanent membership of the Council that would incorporate the interests of all the regional Groups and correspond to the principle of equitable geographic distribution.

In order to carry out its activities, the United Nations needs financial means. The financing of the Organization is the collective responsibility of all Member States and Armenia is not indifferent to the financial situation of the United Nations.

I would like to assure the Assembly that Armenia will do its best to fulfil its financial obligations. However, there is an urgent need to adopt a global package of measures to solve the grave financial situation of the United Nations. These measures should contemplate, *inter alia*, review of the scale of assessments so that it would reflect as accurately as possible the principle of capacity to pay.

Allow me to conclude by wishing the General Assembly every success in the demanding work it faces during this session, and by pledging Armenia's most active and effective cooperation with the delegations of other States.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate for this meeting.

A number of delegations have asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply. I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Abolhassani Shahreza (Islamic Republic of Iran): Today the Foreign Minister of the United Arab Emirates levelled a number of baseless allegations and raised unacceptable claims against the territorial integrity of my country. These claims have no historical or legal foundation. We have made our position in this regard very clear on previous occasions. Moreover, we do not really see any genuine usefulness in a rhetorical approach to this issue, whether in the General Assembly or in

other international gatherings. Indeed, these considerations will make my remarks very brief.

As noted before, we are against any measure which could cause instability in the Persian Gulf region. The people of the region are still suffering from the consequences of the wars and miscalculations of the recent past. While fully aware of the sensitivity of the Persian Gulf region, the Islamic Republic of Iran is committed to respect and maintain peace, security and tranquillity in that region.

Therefore, we believe that the misunderstandings that have arisen in bilateral relations can be addressed with good will. We continue to be determined to maintain and promote brotherly and good-neighbourly relations between the two countries. We are, fortunately, backed by a history of cordial and friendly relations with the United Arab Emirates. We are confident that the existing misunderstanding will be resolved in our bilateral talks in a neighbourly atmosphere.

In this context, we welcome the readiness of the United Arab Emirates, put forth in the statement today, to engage in bilateral discussions without any preconditions by either side.

Mr. Gnehm (United States of America): The statement made today by the Head of the delegation of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya is yet another example of Libya's constant campaign to try to turn its international obligations into an issue between States. This is not an issue between States. Nor, as it was just alleged, has the Security Council adopted a so-called double standard with respect to Libya. What it has adopted is a principled stand against States which sponsor terrorism. The issue is Libyan failure to comply with international obligations imposed on Libya by the Security Council. Those obligations are clear. Those obligations have not changed. So-called compromises offered by Libya are unacceptable. There can be no negotiation between Libya and the Security Council on the fulfilment of Chapter VII obligations.

Libya's refusal to meet the requirements of the Security Council shows the measure of its regard for the United Nations. Evasion of these requirements will not bring a solution to the problem between Libya and the world of nations. The Government of Libya knows what needs to be done to bring an end to sanctions: full compliance with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council. The sooner it does this, the better for all.

The Head of the delegation of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya raised the subject of United States law related to sanctions on Libya. A preference to act multilaterally and for consultation with other Governments is built into our law. In implementing it, the Administration of the United States of America will be mindful of our international obligations. This act is designed to deter, not to punish, and to help guard the international system from the threat posed by Libyan support for terrorism.

Mr. Hollis (United Kingdom): In his speech, the head of the delegation of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya referred to the bombings of Pan American flight 103 and UTA flight 772 — terrorist incidents in which 441 people from 27 separate States Members of the United Nations were murdered.

I would like to take this opportunity to re-state my Government's position. Libya is once again trying to cloud the issue at hand. This is not about a dispute between the Libyan Government and a number of countries. It is about the need for the international community to respond to acts of international terrorism, and about the consistent failure of the Libyan Government to comply fully with Security Council resolutions 731 (1992), 748 (1992) and 883 (1993).

Compliance with Security Council resolutions under Chapter VII is an obligation of all States Members of the United Nations. The United Kingdom seeks no more, and no less, than that Libya demonstrate its respect for the United Nations and the international community by complying fully with the relevant resolutions. It is not for Libya to try to negotiate with the Security Council about its obligations under Chapter VII of the Charter. These obligations are clearly set out in the resolutions. So-called compromises offered by the Libyans, and referred to in the Libyan representative's speech, are not acceptable.

It is for the Security Council — not for the Libyan Government — to decide on measures necessary for the maintenance of international peace and security. It is for the Libyan Government to abide by these decisions — promptly and in full.

Ms. Gazeau-Secret (France) (interpretation from French): The French delegation feels that it must set out some facts and clarify certain points in connection with the statement made by the Libyan Foreign Minister, Mr. Omar Mustafa Muntasser.

The attack on UTA flight 772 and the attack against Pan American flight 103 at Lockerbie are not disputes between Libya and three Member States. Rather, they are a dispute between Libya and the Security Council. Security Council resolutions 731 (1992), 748 (1992) and 843 (1993) describe what the Council expects of the Libyan authorities.

The proposal made by the League of Arab States, which was mentioned by the Libyan Foreign Minister, is not an appropriate response to the requirements of the Security Council in connection with the terrorist act perpetrated against Pan American flight 103.

As regards UTA flight 772, the French delegation confirms that the visit to Tripoli by the French magistrate in charge of the investigation of 5-16 July 1996 went smoothly. The magistrate stated he was satisfied with the cooperation of the Libyan authorities during his visit there. My delegation hopes that the results of the visit will make it possible to make progress in implementing the Security Council resolutions, and that the Libyan authorities will continue their efforts to act in accordance with all their obligations in connection with both UTA flight 772 and Pan Am flight 103. Only the fulfilment of their obligations will make it possible for the sanctions imposed by the Security Council to be lifted.

Mr. Samhan (United Arab Emirates) (*interpretation from Arabic*): In responding to the statement by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on the 25-year-long Iranian occupation of the three islands — Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa — which belong to the United Arab Emirates, I wish to state that since its establishment my country has pursued a policy based on peaceful coexistence, good neighbourliness, rejection of the use or threat of use of force and resort to peaceful means in the settlement of disputes, in keeping with the holy principles of Islam, as well as the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter and other international instruments.

My country has always rejected the Iranian occupation of the three islands. We have called on the Iranian Government to resolve the dispute over the islands through bilateral negotiations or mediation by the International Court of Justice.

The United Arab Emirates has responded to all the good offices of many friendly and brotherly countries in an attempt to resolve the dispute peacefully. The latest instance was our response to an invitation to participate in

a group of experts in Qatar in 1995, in order to agree on an agenda for bilateral negotiations between the two countries to resolve the dispute on the three islands peacefully. However, the Iranian Government insisted on secondary issues, unrelated to the question, thus showing a lack of seriousness and readiness to tackle the issue on a bilateral level.

Historical facts contradict the Iranian Government's claims. Indeed, they raise the question of how these three islands can be Iranian when the Iranian Government itself resorted to an attempt to purchase them or rent them as far back as 1929. They then proceeded to occupy the three islands in 1971.

In his statement on 23 September 1996, the Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran said:

"the Islamic Republic of Iran has continued to articulate and pursue initiatives and measures aimed at fostering greater regional confidence; enhancing respect for principles of international law; bringing about transparency in armaments and reduction of military spending; creating zones free from weapons of mass destruction; strengthening peace and security through persistent endeavours to encourage and facilitate understanding and conciliation; and consolidating economic cooperation." (*Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Plenary Meetings, 4th meeting, p. 28*)

This statement contradicts Iranian behaviour. In recent years, there has been an attempt to promote and strengthen military control over the three islands, including the stockpiling of weapons of mass destruction and the entrenchment of the occupation of the three islands. This belies any claims to transparency in armaments or to conciliation and cooperation. The United Arab Emirates Government hopes that this declaration of position by the Iranian Foreign Minister in his statement to the General Assembly will be translated into reality, particularly, as it relates to the three islands, through a review by Iran of its unacceptable policies in the light of current regional and international developments and in response to our initiatives calling for unconditional bilateral negotiations or resort to the International Court of Justice to reach a just settlement ending Iranian occupation of our three islands and achieving the aspirations of peoples of the region to a new era of bilateral and collective relations in the interest of

economic and social development, as well as regional and international peace and security.

Mr. Muntasser (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I wish to comment on the statements made by the representatives of the United States of America and the United Kingdom.

We have become accustomed to this kind of talk from the representative of the United States of America. This is not the first time, following a Libyan statement, that we have heard the same old story: that the dispute between Libya and the United States is a dispute between Libya and the Security Council.

I will not go on at length at this late hour. I would only like to reconfirm to the Assembly that Libya has responded in time to the Security Council resolutions, and in particular resolution 731 (1992), whose provisions have been implemented. We have denounced terrorism and have cooperated with the United Kingdom on the issues on which our cooperation was requested, in particular with regard to the Irish Republican Army. We have also cooperated with France. As the Assembly heard from the representative of France a while ago, there was a visit to Libya by a magistrate, who made contacts and carried out an investigation. The representative of France declared, as did the representative of the United Kingdom last year, that Libya has cooperated in that regard.

With regard to the dispute between Libya and the Security Council, I would like to note that the League of Arab States decision, which has been supported and accepted by Libya, has also been supported and accepted by many international organizations, such as the Organization of African Unity, which has more than 50 members. The Non-Aligned Movement, with a membership of over 100, has also supported that decision. It has also been supported by the Organization of the Islamic Conference, with more than 50 members. The whole world, even some Security Council members, support the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya's position.

What remains to be done in implementation of Security Council resolution 731 (1992) is to deport the detainees, or the accused, and Libya rejects that notion. We have contributed as much as we can to all attempts to find a peaceful resolution to the dispute. We have accepted the League of Arab States proposal to have the accused tried in a neutral setting before the International Court of Justice and by Scottish judges in accordance with Scottish laws. All these proposals have been rejected by those two countries. We absolutely cannot deport our citizens in violation of our national laws. We do not have extradition treaties with those two countries. We are prepared to have the accused tried in a neutral setting, not in the atmosphere prevailing in the United States and the United Kingdom.

All that has been said by the representatives of the United States and of the United Kingdom is but an attempt to avoid the facts. This is not an international dispute. As the Libyan Foreign Minister made clear, such a position is contrary to fact. How could this be an international dispute when Libya's position enjoys international support from countries representing more than two thirds of the world's population?

I shall not go into the details, but I would like to state to the representative of the United States that a law such as the D'Amato law is not at all helpful. Suffice it to recall what the representative of France said here; all of us know that she was referring to the D'Amato law. The United States of America wants to impose its national laws on other countries; it wants its national laws to transcend its national boundaries; it wants them applied to other countries. Suffice it to recall what the French Ambassador and many other speakers have said, and the disapproval of the news media. I do not wish to respond to the representative of France, because the response is contained in her own statement. And I would like to thank France for that.

The meeting rose at 6.25 p.m.



General Assembly

Fifty-first Session

18th plenary meeting

Wednesday, 2 October 1996, 10 a.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Razali Ismail (Malaysia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda Item 9 (continued)

General debate

The President: I call on His Excellency Mr. Domingo Siazon, Jr., Secretary for Foreign Affairs of the Philippines.

Mr. Siazon (Philippines): On behalf of my delegation, Sir, I take pleasure in extending to you our heartfelt felicitations on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session. We in the Philippines and in the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) derive special gratification from congratulating you, a citizen of an ASEAN country, on this great honour.

The Philippines pays tribute to Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, who has led our Organization in the most difficult circumstances.

I must beg your indulgence, Mr. President, and that of our colleagues to speak briefly about recent events in my country, developments which we consider historic, opening a bright new chapter in the history of the Philippines. Exactly a month ago, on 2 September, the Philippine Government and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), which had waged a rebellion for more than a quarter of a century, signed an agreement ending the conflict in Mindanao and establishing a zone of peace and development in that island-region.

On 9 September, Professor Nur Misuari, leader of the MNLF, ran for and was elected to the office of Governor of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao, which is, by virtue of a plebiscite, composed of four provinces in which Muslim Filipinos are in the majority.

At the same time, in accordance with the 2 September agreement, the Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development is being organized under the leadership of the MNLF to help promote peace and development in 14 provinces and nine cities in the southern Philippines. Thus has the Philippines opted for national reconciliation as the only true road to peace and development.

Here, I pay tribute and give thanks to the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), and to the OIC's Committee of Six on the Situation of the Muslims in the Southern Philippines, under the wise and vigorous leadership of Indonesia and with the especially active involvement of Libya, for guiding us along that road towards the goal which we have now achieved.

I mention this because I know that what is essentially a domestic development in the Philippines finds resonance in other places and in the world at large.

We all know only too well that conflicts arising from ethnic and cultural differences are not unique to the Philippines. But just as the Mindanao conflict was not unique, neither was the process of reconciliation that



ended it. We consider the settlement in Mindanao a reflection of the salutary trend towards peace and reconciliation in the world, as well as a modest contribution to it.

In South Africa, the racist abomination that was apartheid has been abolished, and a multiracial Government based on the rule of the majority and the rights of the minority has been put in place, lending new stability to southern Africa.

In the Middle East, nations in contention agreed to take the road of peace. Regrettably, recent events have shown that the road is still strewn with obstacles. We retain the faith that these obstacles are surmountable with good will and a firm conviction that peace must not be destroyed again in a land so revered by people of many faiths. Our most fervent prayers go to the leaders and nations involved that they may soon return to the path of mutual understanding, reconciliation, justice and peace, for both the Palestinian and the Israeli peoples.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, we can at least hope that the Dayton accords, as well as the 14 September and subsequent elections, will put behind us the singular horror of "ethnic cleansing" and lead to a situation where different ethnic groups can live once again in peace and tolerance.

In this hemisphere, the Government of Guatemala and armed dissidents have achieved an accord of security and justice.

In our own region of South-East Asia, we look forward to the completion of a new Constitution by Myanmar that will provide a place in the nation's political life for the nationalities that have for so long been in rebellion and for political groups of many persuasions.

Unfortunately, inter-ethnic conflicts in far too many places continue to inflict suffering on innocent people — notably, for example, in Rwanda and Burundi.

Around the world, simmering beneath the surface, are grievances arising from growing disparities in economic well-being and social status within States and nations. However, on a global scale, there is a clear trend towards reconciliation and tolerance. As it is within nations, so is it between nations. We may be witnessing a new era, one not only of relative peace but also of close cooperation in dealing with the global challenges of today.

The cold war has ended, and with it the deadly reality of armed confrontation between nuclear-armed blocs.

Even the old North-South economic divide is being subsumed in a new global trading regime and in regional economic arrangements, such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, in which the interests of both developed and developing countries are taken into account. These developments in reconciliation and cooperation give us hope that mankind can find the will to work together in meeting the old and new challenges that confront the world as a whole.

I see six major challenges that are central to the future welfare and the very survival of mankind.

The first has to do with the surfeit of weapons that continues to plague the world, particularly the continued deployment and development of nuclear arms and other weapons of mass destruction, the expanding volume of the traffic in conventional arms and the continued production and persistent use of especially injurious devices of war.

The second lies in the potential for conflict over maritime jurisdictions and resources and the need for stable maritime regimes. Another is mankind's continuing assault on the environment, putting into question the sustainability of the world's development. Yet another challenge is the need to maintain the momentum of the liberalization of international trade while cushioning weaker nations and vulnerable sectors of society from its undesirable effects. The fifth challenge is the necessity of ensuring human welfare and dignity within the nation-State and within society. The sixth and last is the growing menace of organized criminal gangs purveying terror, deadly weapons, illicit drugs, indentured labour, and the bodies of our women and children across international borders.

We have made significant progress in the control of arms; but the world remains a dangerous place, and much work remains to be done. We have extended indefinitely the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Many of us have signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty that the General Assembly adopted last month. But we should not stop there, for these are but steps on the road towards complete nuclear disarmament. We continue to call upon the nuclear-weapon States to take seriously their commitment under

Article VI of the NPT to negotiate in good faith the abolition of nuclear weapons.

Towards this end, the Philippines once more joins the call for the parties to the NPT to draw up an international convention prohibiting the use and threat of use of nuclear weapons. As another step, we reiterate the call for the conclusion of an international convention against the production and stockpiling of fissile materials.

Sir, last December in Bangkok, your Prime Minister and my President, together with the Heads of Government of the eight other countries of South-East Asia, signed the South East Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone Treaty. We urge the nuclear-weapon States to commit themselves to respect this Treaty's provisions by adhering to its protocol. Together with the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (Treaty of Tlatelolco), the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty (Treaty of Rarotonga), the Pelindaba Text of the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, and that for Antarctica, the South-East Asian Treaty is a major step towards a southern hemisphere free of nuclear weapons. We support the political linkage among these nuclear-free zones, as was recently proposed.

Of particular concern to us is the unacceptably large number of innocent persons, including a disproportionate number of young children, killed or maimed by landmines. The Philippines has ratified the Convention and its Protocol restricting the use of excessively injurious weapons, landmines, booby traps and similar devices. We have joined the move towards a global ban on anti-personnel mines.

In this spirit, President Ramos while on a visit last December to Cambodia, a country ravaged by landmines, ordered the immediate destruction of the Claymore mines which were then still in the inventory of the armed forces of the Philippines. Compliance with the President's instructions has been completed.

Another potential threat to global and regional peace and security has been the developing scramble for jurisdiction, resources and strategic position in the world's oceans. This has been strongly evident in the situation in the South China Sea, which for the most part is surrounded by South-East Asian States.

Fortunately, the international community has had the collective wisdom to agree on a set of rules, primarily in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, to govern the use of the sea. Not least, the Convention

subjects maritime jurisdictions to the rule of law, defining the nature and limits of those jurisdictions and providing the legal framework for their establishment and for negotiating settlements where they overlap.

The world is threatened not only by weapons of war and by disputes over territory, but also by mankind's assault on the world's fragile environment. The Philippines is firmly committed to the protection of the environment within its national jurisdiction. Environmental protection is a vital consideration in the approval of major development projects. We shall conserve the ecological integrity of the Philippines exclusive economic zone as well as of its internal waters. As an archipelagic country whose exclusive economic zone extends to a portion of the South China Sea, the Philippines places particular importance on preserving the ecological integrity of that body of water, and would welcome the sharing of knowledge and experience gained from efforts to protect the environment in similar bodies of water elsewhere in the world.

A potential threat to the environment arises from the growing use of nuclear energy in the generation of electricity. This growth has been particularly rapid in East Asia, producing nuclear waste with corresponding rapidity. While nuclear power is relatively clean as a source of energy, accidents in the operation of nuclear plants and in the disposal of nuclear waste can cause devastation for the environment as well as for human lives. Equally damaging is the reckless manner in which decommissioned nuclear power plants and nuclear-powered vessels are discarded. It is time for the international community to address this burgeoning problem with the seriousness and urgency that it deserves. Last May, President Ramos proposed the possible organization of ASIATOM, an international body to look into this concern in East Asia and to devise measures to deal with it.

Along with the breakup of empires, the dissolution of hostile alliances, and the spread of the spirit of reconciliation within and between nations, one salutary global development in recent years has been the establishment of an international trading regime based on the increasingly free exchange of goods and services. This development was made possible by the embrace by nearly all the world of market forces as the most efficient way of creating wealth for the world's people.

The efficacy of this principle of international economic relations has been demonstrated in South-East

Asia, where countries have opened up their markets to one another, through the Free Trade Area of the Association of South-East Asian Nations, and to the world for the benefit of all. Next month the Philippines will have the honour of hosting the annual meeting of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (APEC), including an informal meeting of leaders of the 18 participating economies on the Pacific rim.

At that meeting, we will consolidate plans of individual APEC economies into a coherent Manila action plan for APEC that will free up and ease trade, and that will attain the target set for free trade by the year 2010 for the developed participants and by 2020 for the developing economies. The plan includes ways of engaging in economic and technical cooperation, particularly in order to help the less developed economies to adjust to the free-trade regime envisioned in APEC.

A few weeks after the APEC meeting, the first Ministerial Meeting of the World Trade Organization, to be held in Singapore, will review the implementation of the Uruguay Round agreements and seek to develop a work programme to sustain the momentum of global trade liberalization through further negotiations on specific sectors.

The Philippines is strongly committed to the opening up of its economy. In affirming this basic policy of our country, we must ask our economic partners, particularly the developed ones, to desist from circumventing their own commitments to a free international trading regime by providing subsidies to their uncompetitive sectors and by extending them protection in the guise of labour rights or environmental conservation. We must reject this kind of tactic.

We must also urge that the subject and object of development — human beings, their welfare and dignity — not be overlooked. We also believe that the status of women is central to both economic growth and human development. The Philippines therefore calls upon all of us to carry out effectively and in full the Platform of Action adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women and to devote adequate resources to make this possible.

In accordance with our convictions on the status and rights of women, validated at the Beijing conference, the Philippines has actively pressed for international action to combat those scourges that plague the human race: violence against women and trafficking in women and children. Because of the international dimension of these blights on

the human condition, the United Nations and the international community must keep them high on the international agenda until the human race is freed of them. The Philippines and other countries similarly situated have a special concern for women migrant workers because of their peculiar vulnerability to violence and abuse.

The Philippines' stand on the rights of women and children rests on our people's deep conviction of the inherent sacredness of the rights of all human persons, families and communities everywhere on this planet — their rights to freedom, dignity, participation in their own governance and to development.

Our lives, our well-being and our rights are constantly threatened by the activities of transnational criminal gangs. Some of these gangs traffic in drugs. Some steal and smuggle cars. Some deal in the illicit buying and selling of arms. Others engage in terror for a variety of causes. Still others traffic in women, children, or people eager for work.

The Philippines is prepared to consider the draft convention proposed by Poland on measures to combat organized crime. We commend Poland for this timely initiative.

The United Nations is the keystone of mankind's efforts on behalf of disarmament, the rule of law in the world's oceans, the preservation of the Earth and its environment, economic and social development, the fight against organized crime, and the protection of human rights. Because of its central and growing importance in human affairs, the Philippines firmly believes that the United Nations must be constantly renewed and invigorated to enable it to respond to the challenges that face each generation.

The Philippines favours the enlargement of the Security Council's permanent membership through the addition of countries that are politically and economically able and willing to assume the responsibilities of such membership. At the same time, we believe in greater representation on the basis of equitable geographical distribution. The various innovative proposals now on the table deserve close examination. But the issue of membership cannot be considered in isolation; it has to be addressed in the context of reform of the Security Council — reform towards greater transparency and democracy of its working methods and reform towards a more balanced relationship with the General Assembly,

which must retain pre-eminence in the affairs of the United Nations.

However, no structural changes in the United Nations will be effective unless it is assured of the necessary flow of financial resources. Our Organization, no matter how much reform takes place, can function effectively only if it knows with reasonable certainty whether and when it can pay its staff and meet the other obligations arising from operations that, after all, are mandated, often unanimously, by the Member States themselves.

Simple mathematical calculations will demonstrate that the financial crisis of the United Nations cannot be eased unless we all comply with the financial obligations that we freely undertook. We must pay our dues in full, on time and without conditions. Specifically, the United Nations can rest on fairly stable financial foundations if all of us pay our contributions to the regular budget for each year by the end of January of that year.

The Philippines favours a revision of the scale of assessments for United Nations contributions so as to reflect current political and economic circumstances. However, logic and consistency dictate that similar adjustments be made in the shares of the countries affected in the capitalization of the international financial institutions, including the World Bank and regional development banks such as the Asian Development Bank.

The world's peace, stability and progress, and the welfare and dignity of its inhabitants, depend in large measure on the United Nations — not on the Secretary-General or the Secretariat alone. Although their role is crucial, they depend above all on us, the Member States, which, together with our peoples, make up the United Nations. We are the United Nations. Let us make it work.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Kenya, His Excellency The Honourable Stephen Kalonzo Musyoka.

Mr. Musyoka (Kenya): On behalf of the Government of Kenya, I should like to convey to you, Sir, my sincere congratulations and best wishes on your unanimous election as President of this session of the Assembly. Your election to this high office is a fitting testimony to Malaysia's commitment to, and support for, the United Nations. Your country has been an ardent champion of the cause of developing countries. I am confident that your sterling qualities and versatile diplomatic capabilities will steer this Organization to greater heights.

I also wish to pay tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, who presided over the last session with great skill and dedication.

In the same vein, allow me to reiterate my delegation's appreciation to the Secretary-General for the able manner in which he has borne the mantle of this Organization. We wish to commend him for his achievements during the last five years, despite the many obstacles that the Organization has faced.

Mr. Baumanis (Latvia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Since its inception, the General Assembly has provided Member States with the opportunity to exchange views on issues of common concern to the international community, with a view to securing a stable and peaceful world. To this end, I wish to assure you, Sir, of Kenya's commitment and determination to work together with other Member States in order to realize the Organization's ideals and objectives. We believe that the success of the United Nations depends on the collective resolve of its Members.

The international community still faces a number of conflicts that are of great concern, as they continue to undermine international peace and security. We are painfully reminded by history that good and evil coexist, and that without societal restraints, humanity is in eternal danger. As we approach the twenty-first century, and with the cold war behind us, the international community now faces numerous new and complex challenges posed by globalization, fragmentation, democratization and marginalization. There is a need to redesign the international order to meet these challenges. In this regard, we welcome the recent initiatives by the Organization to strengthen its conflict-prevention mechanisms and to promote preventive diplomacy and confidence-building measures.

The scourge of armed conflicts in certain parts of Africa constitutes one of the most urgent socio-political problems facing the continent, resulting in a serious threat to security, social cohesion and economic progress. These conflicts have posed serious challenges primarily due to the complexities associated with their internal character. Inter- and intra-State conflicts have led to a multitude of problems, including loss of life, destruction of property, poverty, ethnic tensions and underdevelopment in the countries where they occur.

These conflicts have been compounded by natural calamities resulting in a large number of refugees and displaced persons. We wish to reiterate our call to the international community to increase its support in alleviating the suffering of these people.

Since the inception of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963, we have witnessed no less than 20 full-fledged civil wars on the African continent. Over the years, some of these wars have been resolved, while others have intensified. We are pleased that peace has been achieved in most parts of Africa. Sadly, however, there are still some intractable conflicts going on, notably in Burundi, the Sudan, Somalia and Liberia.

The conflict in Burundi, with its accompanying ethnic character, is of great concern to Kenya and the countries of the subregion. The recent *coup d'état* in that country, which overthrew a constitutionally established Government, has compounded the political crisis. It negates the efforts of the OAU to bring to an end the era of military coups which have bedeviled the continent and remains an obstacle to Africa's quest for peace and stability.

In their efforts to find a lasting political settlement, the countries of the subregion — Ethiopia, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Zaire and Kenya — held a series of meetings culminating in the imposition of sanctions against that sisterly country. These sanctions are aimed at putting pressure on the new regime to restore a democratically elected Assembly, unban political parties and enter into unconditional negotiations with all parties to the conflict.

While we welcome the recent Security Council resolution on Burundi, we appeal to the Council to take more decisive steps to ensure that the leaders in Burundi comply with the peace initiative of the second regional summit on Burundi held in Arusha. In this regard, my delegation wishes to take this opportunity to commend the efforts of Julius Nyerere, former President of the United Republic of Tanzania, who continues to facilitate the peace process in Burundi. We take this opportunity to urge the international community to render support to these measures and initiatives.

The situation in Somalia continues to be worrisome. The prolonged nature of this conflict, with its accompanying negative effects on the neighbouring countries, remains a matter of great concern to my country. It is now time for the international community to bring pressure to bear on the Somali faction leaders to come to the negotiating table and reach agreement that will, once

and for all, relieve the agony and suffering of the Somali people. Kenya will continue to provide its cooperation and support.

With respect to the search for a durable peace in the Sudan, Kenya, as the Chairman of the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD) subcommittee on the peace initiative on Sudan, is working together with the other member States to find appropriate remedies to the conflict. While there are no easy solutions to this conflict, the countries of the region, which remain seized of the matter, are hopeful that, through preventive diplomacy, there will soon be an end to the atrocities and that peace will be restored in the Sudan as well.

I wish to take this opportunity to express the appreciation of my Government for the confidence the OAU has bestowed upon my country by endorsing Kenya as the sole candidate for the non-permanent seat in the Security Council allocated to Africa for the period 1997-1998 at the elections to be held later this year. The election of Kenya to the Council will provide us with the opportunity to contribute even further to the continued search for international peace and security.

The maintenance of international peace and security is a collective responsibility of us all. It was with this in mind that the General Assembly at its fiftieth session urged the Conference on Disarmament to conclude the negotiations for a comprehensive and truly verifiable treaty banning all nuclear testing. It was also with this understanding and expectation that Kenya and other African countries affirmed their commitment to outlawing nuclear testing and the possession of nuclear weapons on the African continent. Towards this end, the Pelindaba Treaty was signed in Cairo on 11 April 1996, declaring Africa a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone. We commend similar efforts that have been undertaken to declare other regions nuclear-free zones.

Kenya reaffirms its commitment to total nuclear disarmament. There is no longer any justification for the possession of nuclear weapons nor for their testing. We must work towards the achievement of the goal of complete elimination of all nuclear weapons within a given time-frame. Kenya therefore welcomes the recent conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty as an important step in this direction.

The United Nations has a critical role to play in consensus-building in international economic cooperation. Kenya is confident that the Organization will continue to

uphold its principles of universality, sovereignty and multilateralism in its decisions and operational activities. We are of the view that the United Nations should be strengthened in order effectively to carry out its mandate and follow-up on the programmes of action that have been agreed upon at the various international conferences. The continuum of global conferences in recent years has enabled us to create a new vision of cooperation towards global development needs. Indeed, the most recent of these, the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), which took place in Istanbul, Turkey, endorsed the need for quick action in addressing the dual objectives of adequate shelter for all and sustainable human settlements. To realize these objectives, the Conference called for new and additional resources and for the strengthening of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements in order for it effectively to carry out its mandate. In this context, Kenya believes that, for this to become a reality, international commitment is imperative.

We also view the World Food Summit to be held in Rome this year as a major United Nations conference that will address itself to the primary needs of mankind by ensuring food security and sustainable development. We expect the international community to render appropriate support in order to realize these objectives.

While most developing countries continue in their strenuous economic reform efforts, the question of the debt burden and debt servicing remains a major obstacle. Kenya calls for an early consensus on debt relief, reduction and possible cancellation. It is expected that the Bretton Woods institutions will quickly conclude their consultations on the steps to be taken to address the debt problem of developing countries. These should include additional innovative measures that would provide social safety nets to vulnerable groups, particularly children, women and the poor.

My own country, Kenya, under the leadership of President Daniel arap Moi, has undertaken far-reaching political and economic reforms. These reforms have been undertaken at painful costs and with adverse effects on the population. However, after suffering a decline in economic growth as a result of the stringent reform measures, our economy is now on the path of recovery and has registered a growth rate of between 5 and 6 per cent this year. The Kenyan economy is now totally liberalized. All foreign exchange restrictions have been abolished, making Kenya one of the most attractive investment destinations anywhere in the world. In order to achieve higher growth and to maintain the development momentum, Kenya appeals for

the continued commitment, understanding and support of our development partners.

We are also committed to regional integration and the widening of economic space, designed to integrate national economies into formal groupings, centring on trading blocs. The inauguration of the East African Cooperation in Arusha early this year by the three Heads of State of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, marks an important milestone in our efforts towards political and socio-economic integration. This arrangement, which brings together a population of over 70 million people, has created vast opportunities for investment in our subregion. It also constitutes an important building block towards the realization of the African economic community.

We have also recently revitalized IGADD and expanded its mandate to focus on issues of development and conflict prevention, management and resolution. The revitalized IGADD will require full support from our development partners for a speedy implementation of the regional initiatives. In the wider subregion, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa continues to be the main vehicle for regional integration in eastern and southern Africa.

Kenya's greatest asset is its environment. The herds of wildlife which migrate through the plains, the mysterious forests, the snow-peaked mountains, the ancient lakes and the extraordinary landscapes of the Great Rift Valley have attracted generations of visitors and have become to many a symbol of the beauty and purity of the African continent. Throughout the world, space is being taken up for development purposes by expanding populations. Inappropriate land practices run counter to the conservation of natural resources. Precious species are becoming either endangered or indeed extinct.

In Kenya, our policies have been designed to preserve the environment as a common heritage for mankind. We have resisted all pressures against conservation and have created a sanctuary for a great variety of biodiversity in all its grandeur. Furthermore, the Government of Kenya has recently initiated major innovative steps that will ensure the protection of the ecosystem for the enjoyment of future generations. These include public awareness, environmental education, and, most importantly, the Great Rift Valley Conservancy Programme, which will ensure integrated utilization of land. We wish to appeal to the international community to make available the necessary resources to augment

such efforts, in order to realize the objective of sustainable development as called for in Agenda 21.

In the face of the complex nature of emerging problems in the world today, the demands on the United Nations continue to increase as Member States expect more and more from it. The pressures of facilitating conflict resolution and peacekeeping, promoting sustainable development and combating social problems associated with poverty, disease and famine, have made the demands even more urgent.

We therefore welcome efforts to reform the United Nations so that it can serve the interests of Member States more effectively. However, as the United Nations continues in its reform endeavours, the General Assembly must be given greater visibility and authority. The Security Council must be reformed to reflect the principles of democracy, transparency and equitable representation. My delegation wishes to urge Member States to exercise greater flexibility on the various innovative positions with regard to reform of the Security Council in order to reach an early consensus. Similarly, in undertaking financial reforms, bold and practical measures are necessary to ensure adequate and predictable resources. The obligation of Member States to pay their assessed contributions for the regular and peacekeeping budgets, in full, on time and without conditions, cannot be overemphasized.

We wish to underscore that reform cannot be an end in itself but must be seen as a necessary tool for enabling the Organization to achieve its objectives in a more efficient and cost-effective manner.

We welcome the recent arrangements to establish Nairobi as the location of one of the four United Nations Centres — the only one in the whole of the developing world. We regret, however, that the two United Nations programmes with their Headquarters in Nairobi continue to suffer from lack of adequate funding and capacity underutilization, despite their enormous potential.

The recent tendency to locate environment-related secretariats away from Nairobi has had a negative effect on the strengthening of the Centre and should be discouraged. We are convinced that institutional linkage is a vital component for the enhancement of efficiency and capacity-utilization of the limited resources. In this respect, Kenya wishes to record its appreciation to the Secretary-General for holding the meeting of the Administrative Committee on Coordination in Nairobi in April 1996 — a first for the developing world. We in Africa were particularly proud to

host that high-level meeting, which took place immediately after the Secretary-General launched the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa.

Finally, we wish to take this opportunity to commend the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for initiating far-reaching reforms within the United Nations system since his assumption of the high office of chief executive of the Organization. My delegation wishes to express its satisfaction at his untiring efforts to steer the Organization to greater heights as we move into the next century.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic, Mr. Farouk Al-Shara'.

Mr. Al-Shara' (Syrian Arab Republic) (*interpretation from Arabic*): It is my pleasure to congratulate Mr. Razali Ismail on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session, and to congratulate his friendly country, Malaysia, on his election to that high international post. We are confident that his political experience and diplomatic skill will lead to the success of this session's deliberations. May I also extend our thanks to his predecessor for conducting the work of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly.

On this occasion, we should like to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his efforts to enhance the role of the United Nations, and our concern that his international standing, and his mandate under the Charter be respected. We also believe that the common interest of Member States requires the support of his candidature for a second term.

We live in a region which, because of the injustice, occupation and aggression it has witnessed for decades, has had more than its share of victims of wars and violence. It was impossible to envisage a solution to end such tragedies and to respond to the aspirations of the peoples of the region as long as the Arab-Israeli conflict continued to prevail in the absence of a just and comprehensive peace.

Many people do not know how many international endeavours were made, how many meetings were convened, how many parties contributed, how many letters were sent and assurances given before agreement was reached between the parties on the foundations and rules that made up the terms of reference of the Madrid

Peace Conference. It is now five years since the Madrid Conference was convened and, in turn, bilateral negotiations set up. Those negotiations survived various periods of tension, interruption, set-back — and progress. They generated thousands of pages of records. Both Syria and Israel agreed on Israel's withdrawal from the Golan back to the boundary of 4 June 1967. Negotiations then proceeded to the other elements of peace — all under the supervision of the United States of America, and with its participation.

Now, after all those international efforts, which were unprecedented in the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict, a new Government has taken office in Israel. It has set itself the opposite course to that of its predecessor, and has declared "no" three times: no to withdrawal from the Golan; no to withdrawal from occupied Palestinian lands; and no to a Palestinian State.

To anyone who has followed the declarations and practices of the Israeli Government since it assumed power, it is clear that it has not wasted a single opportunity to underline its insistence on changing the foundations and rules of the peace process, to attempt to demolish all the achievements of the past five years and to call for a return to negotiations from square one, without preconditions — in other words, without the Madrid terms of reference, in accordance with the "peace for peace" formula, with the objective of imposing its *fait accompli* on the Arabs.

President Hafez Al-Assad has said:

"If this is what the Israeli Prime Minister has in mind, why should Syria want peace? If peace does not return the land to its rightful owners, why should we call for it? Can any thinking person in this world expect Syria to establish peace with the Israeli Government while Syrian land remains in Israeli hands? That is why I say that if Netanyahu stays that course, I do not believe there is any window for a just and comprehensive peace in the region."

One of the dilemmas facing the Middle East peace process is that certain Israeli leaders are encouraging, rather than discouraging, extremism in Israeli society. They are the ones who add fuel to the fire whenever a better climate for the achievement of peace begins to develop. There are many examples of such an attitude, which we do not have time to provide today. It is sufficient to recall that in the aftermath of the Hebron massacre voices were raised everywhere, even in Israel itself, calling for the Jewish settlers, who number less than 400, to move from the heart of Hebron, which is home to more than 120,000

Palestinians. However, the Israeli Government refused to withdraw from Hebron, portraying such a move as the ultimate painful concession.

The bloody confrontations that broke out following the opening of the tunnel that Israel dug under the wall of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, as well as previous deliberate Israeli provocations and the unjustified escalation of tensions against Syria and Lebanon over the past few weeks, all confirm that the Israeli Government did not take office in order to resume peace negotiations on the basis of international legitimacy, the Madrid terms of reference and the "land-for-peace" formula, but rather in order to launch new negotiations with no terms of reference, entrenching a *fait accompli*.

During his European tour, Prime Minister Netanyahu announced that his decision to open the tunnel was designed merely to ease the movement of tourists and spare them a walk of a few dozen extra metres. Imagine how guilty those tourists would feel if they believed that, in order to secure their comfort, the Israeli authorities killed about 80 Palestinians, caused the deaths of 15 Israelis, and wounded more than a thousand people. They would not, of course, believe it; we do not believe it — and neither does the head of the Israeli Government, who revealed his true expansionist intentions when he later claimed that the tunnel had been there for two thousand years, and arrogantly declared that it would remain open for ever.

Perhaps the huge number of innocent victims who fell in Jerusalem and in the towns of the West Bank and Gaza have hastened the unmasking of such deceit. In this way the Israeli Government appears to public opinion as it truly is: neither desirous of a just peace nor keen to pursue it. This was reflected in the statements made by many Foreign Ministers in the Security Council, where Israel appeared totally isolated, besieged on all sides by statements deploring and denouncing its action, with the voices that usually volunteer to defend it dying away.

The Israeli Government's fuelling of extremism did not stop there. General Sharon, the Israeli Minister for Infrastructure, issued a decision last week allocating three new sites on the occupied Syrian Golan for building 600 housing units. Perhaps a large segment of international public opinion and some politicians are not aware that without the financial aid and huge governmental subsidies given to Jewish settlers, they would not settle in the Golan, especially as they are well aware that the Golan is

Syrian territory, which they will have to leave sooner or later.

Given my comments, it might be concluded that the Israeli Government has no strategy for peace but has, it seems, chosen the path of confrontation. The path of confrontation, however, is very costly for several reasons. First, Israel can start a war whenever it chooses, but cannot end it when it chooses. Israel might wreak considerable destruction here and there, but it can never destroy the will of a nation that has deep roots of civilization which spread all over the world. Many Israelis may be unaware that all the wars they have fought between October 1973 and April 1996 have gained them nothing except human and political losses and further international condemnation.

Secondly, the path of confrontation is very costly because the international community rejects war and aggression and calls for the achievement of a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. Israel knows that the Arabs have opted for peace as their strategic option, including at the summit level. In taking this stand they have been supported by the summit of the States of the Non-Aligned Movement, the summit of the European Union and the summit of the Group of Seven industrial countries, all of which have stressed the need to adhere to the foundations of the peace process, relevant Security Council resolutions and the "land-for-peace" formula, as well as respect by the parties for the agreements and commitments reached so far.

Given these facts, it would be unacceptable if peace were not also a strategic option for Israel — indeed, it would be a real catastrophe. The achievement of a just and comprehensive peace, to which the peoples of the region and the world aspire, requires Israel's withdrawal from all occupied Arab land, pursuant to Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978).

Syria reaffirms its attachment to the unity of both the territory and the people of Iraq. Syria rejects any attempt to violate the unity and territorial integrity of Iraq's territory or to interfere in its internal affairs, including the attempt to establish a so-called security zone in northern Iraq. Syria also calls for an end to the suffering of the brotherly Iraqi people, and for a continuation of the implementation of Security Council resolutions, including a solution to the issue of Kuwaiti detainees.

With regard to the Lockerbie crisis, Syria expresses its concern for the human and material harm that has been done to the brotherly people of Libya as a result of the

continuing coercive measures imposed on them by the Security Council. Syria reaffirms the statement made in the final declaration on the issue of the recent Arab summit, and calls for a response to the initiative submitted by the Arab League for solving this crisis.

Syria hopes that the United Arab Emirates and the Islamic Republic of Iran can find a peaceful solution to the crisis over the three islands in a way that will preserve good-neighbourly relations and contribute to the strengthening of security and stability in the region.

Syria expresses its support for the principles agreed upon by the Governments of Yemen and Eritrea for a solution to their conflict through international arbitration. Our position flows from our desire for good-neighbourly relations between them and our belief in the importance of re-establishing security and stability in the Red Sea region.

Syria also expresses its concern at the continuing deterioration of the situation in Somalia and reiterates the call of the Arab summit to the leaders of the Somali factions to achieve national reconciliation and to work towards the establishment of a national authority representing our brothers, the Somali people, as a whole.

With regard to Korea, Syria expresses its support for measures that would guarantee peace and stability in the Korean peninsula and for the aspirations of the Korean people to reunification.

The celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations provided an important opportunity for us to forge a common vision of the future of international relations. On that occasion, we said that the crisis facing the United Nations does not arise from the purposes and principles of the Charter, but rather from the United Nations decision-making mechanism and the selective way in which decisions are implemented. We also observed that the Organization's serious financial crisis is, in fact, merely the reflection of a political crisis that essentially revolves around the identity of the United Nations and its role in the post-cold-war era.

In the light of those comments, the obvious question is: Will it be possible to introduce meaningful reforms into the structure of the United Nations that are acceptable and satisfactory to Member States? That is the true challenge, requiring that we all strive to strengthen dialogue and international cooperation. This will ensure

that reforms take place which fulfil, in substance and in form, the aspirations of Member States.

Today, as we stand on the threshold of the next century, we are all faced with serious challenges that require us to create an environment that will allow future generations to live in peace, security and cooperation within a system of international relations free from violence and confrontation. That is the hope of our peoples. This is what we must endeavour to achieve as we look forward to a better future, one both more just and more humane that will benefit all mankind.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria, Mr. Georgi Pirinski.

Mr. Pirinski (Bulgaria): A year ago this month, the General Assembly adopted by acclamation the Declaration on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations. Thus, the special commemorative session of the Assembly, attended by 128 Heads of State and Government, solemnly reaffirmed our commitment to the purposes and principles of the Charter. As Ambassador Butler of Australia, the Chairman of the Preparatory Committee, stated, that Declaration must serve as a set of guidelines for cooperation amongst all nations in the years ahead.

The fiftieth session, so ably presided over by Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral of Portugal, took the initial step towards translating these new guidelines into practical action aimed at the twenty-first century. In congratulating Mr. Razali Ismail upon his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session, I wish him every success in his highly responsible mission to carry further the new tasks and endeavours of the Organization in the course of this session.

Last year's Declaration spelt out four main areas for action in fulfilment of the mission of the United Nations in the coming decades: peace, development, equality and justice. The world of the twenty-first century will confront two great opposing forces: globalization and fragmentation. Bulgaria, as an active member of the international community, has felt both the new opportunities and the new risks. In developing its policies and responses, Bulgaria has proceeded on the basis of its European identity, particularly its association with and prospective membership of the European Union. I would therefore like to state that we share in and attach importance to the European Union memorandum to this session and to the statement delivered by Mr. Dick Spring on behalf of the Union.

With the transition from the post-war bipolar system to a world of multi-centrism, the regional format will acquire ever-growing importance. This has been our experience in the Balkans, at least, a region which has sustained the full blast of the forces of both globalization and disastrous fragmentation.

In line with its consistently maintained positions, Bulgaria welcomed from the outset the Dayton and Paris agreements. We provided observers as well as police personnel to the international missions in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The recent elections in that country, notwithstanding their deficiencies and problems, represent a vitally important step forward. They opened the way for yesterday's welcome and important Security Council resolution to lift the sanctions imposed on Yugoslavia.

At the same time, even during the active phase of the conflict, we have worked for the promotion of the positive trends of good-neighbourliness throughout the region. At last year's fiftieth session, the Prime Minister of Bulgaria highlighted this priority feature of Bulgaria's foreign policy, favouring comprehensive regional cooperation. In particular he stated our intention to convene a meeting of Central and South-East European States in order to examine a broad range of issues concerning long-term stability, security and cooperation throughout the region.

Today, it is my pleasure to inform the Assembly that such a meeting took place in Sofia on 6 and 7 July 1996 at foreign ministerial level. At that meeting, seven countries — Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, Turkey and Yugoslavia — adopted a comprehensive document, the Sofia Declaration on Good-Neighbourly Relations, Stability, Security and Cooperation in the Balkans.

The President returned to the Chair.

The text of the Declaration was duly circulated as an official document of the General Assembly and the Security Council. The Declaration was fully supported by all participants in the broader format of the Sofia ministerial meeting, including representatives from Croatia, Slovenia, Italy, Hungary, and the five Contact Group countries — Germany, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States of America; Ireland, which holds the presidency of the European Union; representatives of countries chairing the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Central European Initiative, Black Sea

Economic Cooperation; and high-level representatives from the United Nations, the European Commission, the Council of Europe, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, the World Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. The High Representative, Mr. Carl Bildt, was also present, took part in the meeting and made a valuable contribution to its success.

I should like to outline very briefly the main spheres of activity launched at the meeting in Sofia in July. In the first area — enhancing regional peace and stability, and building confidence and good-neighbourliness — the point of departure was for the countries in the region to reaffirm their allegiance to the fundamental principles of inter-State relations as spelt out by the Charter, as well as in Helsinki and Paris.

In line with these principles, Bulgaria has been actively promoting confidence-building with all its neighbours and has already concluded agreements to this effect with Turkey, Greece and Romania. We stand ready to enter into such agreements with our other neighbours, as well as on a multilateral regional basis.

Another important step in this direction will be the convening in Sofia of a meeting of Ministers of Defence as provided for in the Declaration of the Balkan countries. This meeting should contribute significantly towards strengthening security, enhancing confidence and considering future arms-control measures in the region.

Recent regional multilateral cooperation in South-East Europe has focused on infrastructure development and upgrading as important factors for economic growth and regional stability. There is an emerging consensus that it should be oriented towards upgrading and linking local infrastructures with trans-European ones, as well as with those in other adjacent areas — the eastern Mediterranean, northern Africa and across the Black Sea and into Asia. Transport infrastructure development is the subject of local cooperation between Albania, the Republic of Macedonia and Bulgaria, with direct financial and technical assistance being provided by the United States of America; a quadrilateral agreement has recently been signed with regard to this matter. It is also the subject of trilateral cooperation between Greece, Bulgaria and Romania. An important contribution to the cause of good-neighbourliness and infrastructure development are the Bulgarian-Greek cross-border cooperation and water-sharing agreements, which recently entered into force and will be submitted to the OSCE under the Pact on Stability in Europe.

Furthermore, in accordance with the agreement between the Balkan countries, the Bulgarian Government began preliminary consultations towards setting up a transregional information and contacts centre for infrastructure development. We expect further contributions to be made to the positive developments in this field from the forthcoming meeting of Ministers of Transportation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and Central European Initiative partner countries in Sofia in November 1996.

Together with its neighbours in South-East Europe, Bulgaria is building regional cooperation on the basis of the rule of law and full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including those of persons belonging to different national, ethnic, religious and cultural minorities. The countries from the region once again reaffirmed their commitment to these principles and values. They also adopted specific guidelines in the various areas of cultural contacts and cooperation through exchanges and joint programmes. These should add to existing bilateral or multilateral programmes that promote better mutual understanding and the overcoming of negative stereotypes inherited from the past.

Joint action in the field of crime prevention and the elimination of international terrorism envisages closer cooperation between central, regional and border authorities through efficient communications and exchange of information; a commitment to accede to all relevant international conventions that prevent and punish international crime and terrorism; joining and participation in specialized regional forums for discussing the problems of illicit drug-trafficking, organized crime and regional anti-terrorist cooperation; and the elaboration of a regional programme to combat organized crime. This already represents a tangible contribution to the implementation at the regional level of a zero-tolerance approach to terrorism.

The Sofia Declaration thus set out both the framework and the terms of reference for comprehensive regional cooperation. To this end, follow-up activities are being elaborated in all areas and we hope that all States from the region will take part at the next ministerial meeting in Greece in 1997.

Proposals on cooperation in South-East Europe have also come from outside the region. The Florence conference of the Peace Implementation Council last June identified the three initiatives fostering such cooperation: the Balkan conference initiated by the Bulgarian

Government, the stability process under the terms of the Royaumont declaration of 12 December 1995 and the South-East Europe cooperation initiative of the United States Government. There is important potential for interaction between the three initiatives, with the process launched in Sofia serving as a comprehensive basis which could link up with the other two initiatives in specific areas of common interest.

This regional endeavour represents an integral building block in the development of an all-European system of security and cooperation. We expect the Lisbon OSCE summit in December 1996 to address in a comprehensive manner this set of issues and provide guidelines for future action at both the European and regional levels. Various bodies and agencies of the United Nations system, such as the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Branch and other bodies could also be highly effective in encouraging and promoting at the regional level the ideas and initiatives that I have outlined.

I would like to state Bulgaria's position on some United Nations-led and other major endeavours at the global level. We fully share the view that the recent conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is an achievement of truly historic proportions. In pursuit of Bulgaria's long-standing policies in favour of nuclear arms control and disarmament, I had the honour to sign this Treaty on the very first day it was opened for signature. For Bulgaria, a convention on the ban on the production of fissionable material for military purposes would be the next logical stage in the work of the Conference on Disarmament, in which Bulgaria is an active participant.

From the point of view of global as well as regional security, another priority task is the early entry into force and implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. As for the Biological Weapons Convention, Bulgaria is fully in favour of upgrading its control and verification mechanism and is ready to contribute to this end at the forthcoming Review Conference and thereafter.

Bulgaria took an active part in the Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, and its Protocol II. During the negotiations, we made special efforts to take into consideration the new technical requirements on mines as

an absolute prerequisite for the purposes of mine-clearance and the normal conduct of United Nations peacekeeping and humanitarian operations. Furthermore, by a decision taken on 2 May 1996, the Bulgarian Government imposed a three-year ban on exports of anti-personnel mines. Bulgaria, which currently holds the chairmanship of the Commission on Sustainable Development, attaches particular importance, together with the other United Nations Member States, to the special session of the General Assembly on the review of the follow-up process to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro.

In October 1995, Sofia hosted the third Ministerial Conference on Environment for Europe. The Conference provided further impetus to the Environmental Action Programme for Central and Eastern Europe. The ministerial declaration adopted is an important document in the field of environmental protection in Europe and a further step towards implementing the global concept of sustainability.

In recent years, we have witnessed rapid changes in the world economy, changes that can be described by the general trends of liberalization and globalization, both of which are important factors for development. I am happy to inform this Assembly that, after long years of strenuous negotiations, today, 2 October 1996, Bulgaria is becoming a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO). By joining WTO, Bulgaria shall become fully integrated into the world trading system which is essential for us to be able to achieve stable economic growth.

Bearing in mind the new challenges in the social and economic areas in today's multipolar and interdependent world, my country supports the efforts of the international community to enhance and streamline United Nations activities in this field.

Bulgaria is a party to all major international human-rights instruments. We believe that international cooperation in the field of human rights is essential for their implementation. It should be conducted in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law, such as the sovereign equality, political independence and the territorial integrity of States. We are in favour of constructive and open dialogue on even sensitive issues related to human rights in individual States. This approach is not directed against any country. The situations in different parts of the world should be examined in a way that takes into account the specific characteristics of individual countries in a

comprehensive context and be aimed above all at encouraging positive developments and tendencies.

Transnational crime and international terrorism are increasingly emerging, as stated by many speakers in this forum, as one of the major security challenges facing the international community today. They directly affect development and quality of life and erode the very foundations of democratic society. It has become more than obvious that these challenges cannot be addressed effectively by national institutions alone. Today, there is a pressing need to develop new cooperation in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice. Such cooperation could also include more information sharing, including inputs from intelligence sources.

At this session, the General Assembly must carefully examine all valuable ideas and proposals in this field put forward by preceding speakers. My country will readily support the efforts of the international community aimed at the elaboration, on a global level, of efficient measures to combat crime and to eliminate international terrorism.

Allow me to digress for a moment from the prepared text of my speech in order to share with the Assembly a most regrettable and tragic piece of news concerning a political assassination which took place just over 24 hours ago in Sofia. The target was a former Prime Minister of Bulgaria, Mr. Andrei Lukanov. I would like to inform the Assembly that Mr. Lukanov was one of the principal and personal driving forces behind the democratic changes that took place in Bulgaria after 1989. He staked his personal efforts and future on the successful introduction into Bulgarian society of the values of democracy, the promotion of human rights and economic reform. He was also well-known within the United Nations family, in particular in Geneva, having been an active promoter of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development since its early years and having promoted Bulgaria's participation in the world trading system and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. In an ironic twist of fate, today marks, as I said, Bulgaria's accession to WTO.

The Bulgarian Parliament adopted a declaration on this occasion several hours ago. It firmly declares the will of all political forces in Bulgaria — Mr. Lukanov having been an active member of Parliament for the last seven years — not to permit this act in any way to divert Bulgaria from the path towards economic and political reform or to infringe on the peaceful and lawful process of political and public life, including the forthcoming presidential elections at the end of this month.

I have instructed my Mission to transmit the text of this declaration, with a short covering note, to you, Mr. President, the Secretary-General and Member States. I invite all of you to share our feelings of support and sympathy for the family of Mr. Lukanov and to send messages of support to the Bulgarian Parliament. I invite the Assembly, at this point in time, without rising, to share a minute of silence in remembrance of Mr. Lukanov.

Improvements in the effectiveness and functioning of the principal organs, a better balance in their authority and the streamlining of the subsidiary machinery are important conditions for the reform of the United Nations.

The issue of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council is a key component of this process. We share the view that some Member States — developed, for instance Germany and Japan, and developing alike — are able to assume the responsibility of permanent membership. A number of proposals for the reform of the Security Council have already been put on the table and should be examined with due attention. In this respect, I would like to mention the valuable ideas presented by Minister Lamberto Dini of Italy just a few days ago. One of the major developments over the past several years has been the fact that the number of States in the Eastern European Group has almost doubled. We reiterate our conviction that such a rise in membership requires one additional non-permanent seat to be allocated to this Group. Some Balkan countries have already indicated their willingness to apply for non-permanent membership in the Security Council. With its consistent regional policies of good-neighbourliness and cooperation in South-East Europe, as well as in the broader United Nations framework, Bulgaria is equally justified in seeking membership on the Council in the years to come.

It would be remiss of me, however, not to mention some serious flaws in the United Nations peacemaking machinery. The question of finding an adequate solution to the complicated problems arising for third countries as a result of United Nations Security Council-imposed sanctions is one of them. At its fiftieth session the General Assembly once again expressed concern at the persisting special economic problems confronting States affected by sanctions implementation. It also renewed its invitation to the international financial institutions to continue to pay special attention to these problems and their adverse social impact, and to consider ways and

means for mobilizing and providing resources on appropriate terms for mitigating the negative impact of the sanctions on those States. The Assembly also renewed its request to the competent organs, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations to take into consideration the special needs of the affected States and to consider providing assistance to them from their special programme resources.

Regrettably, few are the practical steps in implementing these recommendations. These problems, since they are long-lasting, will continue to exert their negative impact long after the lifting of sanctions. It would be highly counterproductive if the peacemaking essence of sanctions were to be distorted by major economic dislocation in affected third States. Being among the countries suffering most from the implementation of sanctions, at this session Bulgaria will again submit a draft resolution on the subject and I invite all Member States to give it their unanimous and firm support.

The proceedings of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly provide new, important opportunities to continue on the path of reform and increased efficiency. They open up new opportunities to render support to those trends in the modern world, our global village and each of its neighbourhoods, making for societies with greater security and promise in which our children can look forward to a more fulfilling life. Bulgaria is firmly committed to contributing actively and in a constructive spirit to the accomplishment of this new mission of the world Organization.

The President: I share in the shock and sorrow over the loss of a great Bulgarian leader and nationalist.

I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Viet Nam, His Excellency Mr. Nguyen Manh Cam.

Mr. Nguyen Manh Cam (Viet Nam) (*interpretation from French*): On behalf of the delegation of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam. I would like to congratulate you warmly, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session. We are truly proud that you, an experienced representative of Malaysia, a member country of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), have been elected to this important position. We are confident that, under your guidance, our session will achieve many fine results.

Let me take this opportunity to express our high appreciation of the performance of your predecessor,

Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral. We also hold in high regard the dynamism and perseverance of Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in the service of our common cause.

Last year at this time, we had the opportunity to take a retrospective look at the world's development over the past half-century and the role played by the United Nations in this long journey. One year later, the world landscape is still full of contrasts, interwoven with factors and trends of hope and with events and tendencies that give rise to the concerns of the international community at this end of the twentieth century.

In a world of teeming changes, what emerges as invariable are the legitimate aspiration and vigorous determination of nations to achieve peace and development based on equality, democracy, respect for the independence and sovereignty of each country and the identity of each nation. In this grand endeavour, peoples turn to the United Nations for timely support and fruitful assistance because the Organization, having waded through the vicissitudes of a half-century of history, has been daily affirming its crucial role for the world as a whole. Today's challenge for our world Organization is how to reform and adapt itself to the new international circumstances in order to meet the expectations of the peoples.

As the system of international relations in the post-cold-war era takes shape, we can already see its trend towards diversification and multicentrism. In this context, multilateral institutions and mechanisms, especially the United Nations, have assumed an ever-more essential role. However, there are various ways of interpreting the role of our Organization today. As regards the vast majority of the Member countries, the United Nations, in its capacity as a centre for harmonizing inter-State relations, should play a fundamental role in firmly defending international law and in encouraging States' strict and consistent respect for and observation of the United Nations Charter. In this spirit, the United Nations must use its weight and responsibility to stem the practices — such as coercion and imposition, arbitrary embargo and sanctions that bring suffering to innocent people, and flagrant interference in the internal affairs of States, in violation of their independence and sovereignty — that run counter to the current general trends.

To play its role adequately, the United Nations must reform itself so as to increase the representativeness of its institutional organs and to democratize and ensure greater

transparency in our Organization's working procedures and methods. The cornerstones of the democratization of the United Nations system are the reform of the Security Council and the enhancement of the role of the General Assembly. This is a complex and difficult task which requires utmost perseverance. The expansion of the composition of the Security Council and the democratization of its decision-making procedures constitute an urgent demand of the international community. At the same time, the authority and role of the General Assembly, the broadest and most representative body, must be strengthened in response to the legitimate appeal of us all. Certainly, the reform must be undertaken on the basis of the agreed principles, particularly that of consensus, reflecting to the fullest extent the views and aspirations of the majority of the member countries and ensuring the interests of the different regions.

If in today's world democracy in a society means the active participation of its citizens, democracy in international relations requires the active participation of all countries, large or small, rich or poor. Only an increasingly democratized United Nations can enjoy the prestige and confidence necessary for playing its role in harmonizing the actions of States on the basis of international law, as all desire it to. Let us build upon the momentum gathered at the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations so that on entering the twenty-first century, the United Nations can truly serve as an example of democratization in the world's political life.

The wise way to achieve the common objectives of national independence, peace and development is that of cooperation in the spirit of equality, mutual respect and mutual benefit. The globalization of the world economy, the liberalization of trade and investment and the dizzying advances of science and technology now present every State with both unprecedented opportunities and imposing challenges. It is no mere coincidence that the recent summit of the seven major industrialized countries, the G-7, in Lyons, focused on the theme of globalization.

However, the developing countries, and especially the underdeveloped ones, are approaching this trial that is so vital for their development and prosperity poorly equipped and in extremely difficult conditions. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the international community and in particular the developed countries, to give the required attention and adequate assistance to help solve this crucial equation, because it is impossible to accept, in the context of interdependence, a world in which affluence is concentrated in a small number of countries while the

majority of countries continue to struggle against increasing poverty and the gap between the rich and the poor grows inexorably wider.

Given its strength and prestige, the United Nations is able to and needs to play a useful role in this process. In implementing the Agenda for Development, our Organization should concentrate first on the regions in difficulty and on the essential issues. With its financial resources and groups of experts, the United Nations system can assist the countries of the South to overcome their disadvantaged position and succeed in their efforts for timely regional and global integration, in the context of an economic, trade, scientific and technological race on a global scale.

In Viet Nam, for instance, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is carrying out projects to assist us in our integration into the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN). UNDP is also playing an active and effective role to facilitate the establishment of a framework for cooperation among the countries along the Mekong. UNDP is currently working on a national capacity-building project so that Viet Nam can be prepared to participate more effectively in the World Trade Organization (WTO) in the near future. Such practical bilateral and multilateral development projects are to be welcomed.

However, we are now facing a glaring paradox: the need for international cooperation for development continues to grow, while the available means become ever more scarce and natural resources more depleted. In the fierce competition for development, States must concentrate their resources on domestic needs in order to restructure their economies and solve the pressing social problems, thus enhancing their internal strength. That is quite understandable.

Nevertheless, in the current context of increasing interdependence among States, international cooperation, especially the flow of capital and technology transfer from the developed to the developing countries is indispensable, and it is also necessary and beneficial for the sustainable development of the developed countries themselves. Moreover, today, when urgent global issues are strengthening links between all States, a danger to one nation may also affect others, and the stability and prosperity enjoyed by one society may contribute to an environment favourable for the stability and prosperity of other societies.

Hunger, illness, social injustice and other phenomena are all potential threats to the security of each country and the stability of the world as a whole. Allocating of resources to support the development of developing countries and contributing in various ways to bilateral and multilateral international cooperation for development are wise investments for peace and for the shared future of all of our societies.

The United Nations is not immune to this discrepancy between resources and the needs for development assistance. Today, the resources available to the United Nations are not increasing; on the contrary, they are shrinking or being overextended. This worrisome situation calls for the attention and responsibility of all Member States, especially of the major Powers and developed countries that possess greater resources and potential. The measure to be taken immediately, in the unanimous view of Member States, is for every State to fulfil its financial obligations. Moreover, all initiatives to provide supplementary resources for the United Nations should be encouraged. Recently, scholars and renowned personalities have advanced numerous interesting proposals in this regard. We are of the view that the General Assembly should assign the Working Group on the Financial Situation of the United Nations and other relevant working groups the task of seriously studying these proposals in order to explore all possible ways of providing the United Nations with the resources necessary to actively assist in development for all — first and foremost, that of the underdeveloped countries.

The United Nations has a rather weighty responsibility regarding the demands of development. Its role in the globalization process is therefore no less crucial. Since the beginning of this decade the United Nations has initiated and organized a number of world summit conferences on a set of global issues ranging from environment to social development, from population to human rights, from women to children — and coming up we have the World Food Summit, the aim of which is to find and implement coordinated measures at all levels — national, regional, and international — to solve problems of importance for the future of all nations.

If in the resolution of crisis and conflicts the participation of the majority of countries is somewhat limited or even indirect, through an intermediary mechanism, in the resolution of the global issues for development the United Nations has been able to mobilize the direct participation of all countries, big and small, rich and poor, developed and developing, because these are not

just “to whom it may concern” issues. In this manner, the United Nations can succeed in its efforts to emerge from a mere reactive role to crises and conflicts and play a proactive role in preventing such conflicts and crises. Clearly, the resolution of global issues is always broadly democratic in nature.

For all these reasons, we hold that the United Nations should further strengthen its role of assistance and coordination in this essential field and continue to advance the implementation of programmes of action already adopted. It is evident that no organization can replace the United Nations in this vital role. In fulfilling this role, the United Nations will see its prestige enhanced and its image brought closer to the life of each nation and each human being.

The year 1996 will go down in the history of Viet Nam as the beginning of a new stage of development of our country. Last June, the Eighth Congress of the Communist Party of Viet Nam was successfully concluded. The special significance of this historic event is that, based on the successes achieved over the last 10 years of renewal, reform and national revival, the Congress decided to lead the country into a new phase of industrialization and modernization, with a view to doubling by the year 2000 the 1990 per-capita gross domestic product and essentially transforming Viet Nam into an industrialized country in the next 20 to 25 years.

At the same time, we have reaffirmed the pursuit of our foreign policy of independence and sovereignty, openness, the diversification and multilateralism of our international relations, and regional and international integration. It is because of this direction that the foreign policy of Viet Nam has achieved and continues to achieve outstanding results, assisting in the work of nation-building and development in a practical way, and effectively contributing to the resolution of international problems.

Viet Nam has established diplomatic relations with over 160 countries, including all the major Powers and the most prominent world political-economic centres. Viet Nam has commercial relations with more than 100 countries and investment ties with over 50 countries and territories. In addition to expanding its relations with countries of all continents, last year as a full member of the Association of South-East Asian Nations, one of the most dynamic and successful of regional organizations, Viet Nam actively contributed to regional and world cooperation and development.

We are participating more actively in the work of international organizations, especially those of the United Nations system, as well regional organizations. This year, Viet Nam begins its term as a member of the UNICEF Executive Board, and will present its candidature for a seat on the Economic and Social Council at this session of the General Assembly. We hope to receive the support of Member countries of the United Nations to be able to contribute our share to the work of that important body, developing and coordinating policies of economic and social development and cooperation. We are currently preparing for the successful organization of the upcoming seventh Francophone summit to be held in November 1997 at Hanoi. As regards broader integration, Viet Nam is also actively preparing to participate soon in other international organizations, such as the World Trade Organization and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum.

As a new member of the Conference on Disarmament, Viet Nam played an active part in the negotiations on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which it recently signed. By signing that Treaty, Vietnam joined in the broad appeal of the international community that all States refrain from all nuclear testing, regardless of the form, strictly observe the ban on all nuclear-tests and undertake concrete steps and measures towards the total elimination of all nuclear weapons. Viet Nam stands ready to cooperate with all countries for the effective implementation of the Treaty, contributing to a cleaner environment, to greater confidence and to consolidation of international security, aimed at a more secure and healthy world. At the same time, we hold that the verification activities of the Treaty implementation process must be carried out in a fair and impartial manner, with strict respect for the sovereignty of States. In this spirit, we view that the proposal for a programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons submitted recently at the Conference on Disarmament by 28 States, including Viet Nam, deserves serious consideration.

To achieve the objective and sincere desire to build a Viet Nam with a prosperous people, a strong nation and a just and civilized society, we are determined to bring into full play the achievements of the reform and renewal process and equip ourselves with the internal strength needed to move forward steadily on the path of integration. On the basis of our current international relations, we will strengthen our cooperation with other countries and international and regional organizations; we will enhance productivity; we will consolidate the peaceful environment and create international conditions still more favourable, in the service of the prosperity of our nation as well as for the prosperity of the region and the world.

At the threshold of the third millennium, all nation-States are subject to strong pressures of both opportunity and challenge. The vast ability of mankind in this age, together with the extraordinary advances in science and technology, offers us hope for development and prosperity for all nations. Yet the poverty that afflicts more than one fifth of the world population and the gap between the rich and the poor raise concerns. The opportunities seem great but the challenges are acutely felt. To begin the twenty-first century with more hope than anxiety, it will be important for us first to enhance our sense of responsibility and broaden our overall long-term interests: those of peace and development. There is no doubt that the United Nations, the Organization to which we all belong, will contribute actively towards achieving that end.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belarus (His Excellency Mr. Uladzimir Syanko).

Mr. Syanko (Belarus): Allow me first of all to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the post of President of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session.

General debates over a number of years have already clearly indicated that virtually all Member States consider it of vital importance to transform the United Nations into an Organization with enhanced potential in the service of peace and security in the world.

Belarus advocates a pragmatic approach to the reform of the United Nations based on a realistic assessment of the Organization's ability to enhance the practical efficiency of the entire United Nations system along the strategic lines of its activities. One of these is peacemaking, which in the aftermath of the cold war acquired new substance and quality.

Mr. Baumanis (Latvia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The New Testament reads,

"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called children of God." (*Matthew, 5:9*)

Today's efforts by the United Nations to maintain peace are noble indeed. Belarus supports actions to further perfect peacekeeping operations as an important practical instrument at the disposal of the United Nations.

A crystal-clear understanding of peacekeeping operations as a specific means used in conflict settlement, aimed at maintaining peace rather than imposing it and at preventing highly explosive situations from emerging, is a sure guarantee that such operations will be successfully implemented.

We note with satisfaction a substantive breakthrough in the peaceful settlement of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. Belarus emphasizes the key significance of restoring close economic, scientific and cultural ties between the States of the region for the normalization of the situation in the Balkans. That is why we support the idea of making the decision of lifting the economic and trade embargo against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia a permanent one.

Belarus attaches great significance to the process of a peaceful settlement in the Middle East, based on respect for the right of all States of the region to live in peace within internationally recognized borders.

As regards the ways and means to further perfect the Security Council's activities, Belarus would like to emphasize the principle of balanced representation for all regional groups of Member States, in particular the Eastern European group, in a renewed and expanded Security Council.

Given their particular significance, concerted international efforts in the field of disarmament are required in shaping the global security system that would befit the twenty-first century. We consider it a great privilege and honour that our practical actions and initiatives in this domain have been recognized and supported through the election of a representative of Belarus to the post of Chairman of the First Committee at the current session.

This year has been marked by momentous events in Belarus. Very shortly the last nuclear missile will leave the territory of our Republic, thus making the entire territory of Central Europe, from the Baltic to the Black Sea, a nuclear-weapon-free zone. This brings into particular prominence the initiative put forward by Alyaksandr Lukashenka, President of Belarus, to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central and Eastern Europe.

Efforts aimed at setting up and consolidating nuclear-weapon-free zones in various regions of the world are gaining momentum. Hence, we consider it illogical for Europe to remain the only continent where no practical steps have been taken in this direction. We strongly believe

that setting up a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central and Eastern Europe would further enhance the spirit of trust, mutual respect and partnership in that part of the European continent and would serve as a solid contribution by the European nations to nuclear non-proliferation.

In the search for an efficient arms control regime, the delegation of Belarus intends to initiate further consideration at this session of the General Assembly of the item on prohibition of the development and manufacture of new types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons. Ecologically safe destruction of weapons, conversion of military enterprises, legal aspects of the transfer of sensitive advanced technology and of their impact on the development of science and technology stand high on the list of our priorities.

From this lofty rostrum I am proud to say that, despite the formidable economic, social and financial constraints we have had to overcome, Belarus has completely fulfilled all its obligations under the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe. Equally significant is the fact that Belarus submitted to the Secretary-General of the United Nations in July 1996 its ratification instruments on joining the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Located in the geographical centre of Europe, my country has set itself the goal of preventing dangerous tensions from evolving in the region which, more often than any other part of the planet, has been a seat of world wars, in order to help prevent the emergence of new lines of separation, curtains, walls and other constructions that seemed gone for ever.

From that perspective, we must bring to the Assembly's attention the concern of the Belarusian people regarding the eventual rapid expansion of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the deployment of its military infrastructure in close proximity to our borders. It is worth noting that a considerable part of the population of Belarus no longer considers NATO a hostile organization. Yet, being realistic, we must admit that much more time is needed to transform that attitude into a sympathetic stance. It would be appropriate to expect that such large and drastic transformations in the European security system to evolve gradually.

In these new circumstances, the role of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

(OSCE) acquires new significance. In all confidence, we pin our hopes on the forthcoming OSCE summit in Lisbon. The results of the summit, I am convinced, will prove to be a solid basis for enhancing coordination between the United Nations and the OSCE, as well as for better distributing between them the functions of ensuring regional security in Europe in order to help create a comprehensive security model for Europe in the twenty-first century and to further the efforts towards concerted actions by European States aimed at strengthening stability on the continent.

Globalization of the world economy made it possible for the States to considerably expand their markets, as well as the flow of goods, services, finance and technologies, to adjust economic relations and to improve the economic and social well-being of their populations. At the same time, the removal of trade and other economic barriers exposed the vulnerability of countries with less-developed economies. Many of those countries find it difficult to keep pace with the rapid transformations now under way and to break the vicious circle of backward development.

That is why the countries with economies in transition, Belarus included, have every reason to expect that special measures will be taken by the United Nations in order to facilitate their integration into the world economic and trade systems and to help them join existing and emerging multilateral economic institutions and mechanisms.

We reiterate our intention to host an international conference on the sustainable development of countries with economies in transition, to be convened in Minsk in May 1997. I am convinced that the results of the conference will prove a valuable contribution to the five-year review of the implementation of Agenda 21, at the special session of the General Assembly next June.

The activities of the United Nations in the social and environmental fields have a particular significance for Belarus. The problems in these areas are extremely acute due to the negative impact of a number of factors that emerged in the course of complex economic transformations. The leadership of Belarus is undertaking considerable efforts to improve the quality of life of its citizens. At the same time, we are not always able to resolve acute social problems by our own means alone. Decisions adopted at six world summits, held in Rio de Janeiro, Vienna, Copenhagen, Beijing, Cairo and Istanbul, have prompted the needed and long-overdue adoption of a global programme of assistance to the countries that have embarked on the road of market reforms.

The problem of refugees, displaced persons and repatriates is also very acute today. Our Republic welcomes the results of the Geneva regional conference on refugees, displaced persons, other forms of forced movements and repatriates in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). I believe that the establishment, under the aegis of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, of a permanent regional centre on migratory problems and refugees for the countries of Eastern Europe could make a considerable contribution to the process of complete and effective implementation of those decisions. We propose that such a centre be headquartered in Minsk.

Taking urgent measures to combat terrorism, illicit drug trafficking and organized crime is yet another demand of the moment. Proceeding from this premise, we welcome the initiative announced from this rostrum by Poland to introduce a draft United Nations framework convention against organized crime.

Our Republic does not possess nuclear energy, but more than any other State in the world it is interested in the implementation of effective preventive measures in the field of nuclear safety that would make it impossible for new Chernobyls to occur in the future. Belarus is in favour of the comprehensive strengthening of the nuclear-safety regime, including development and adoption of the appropriate international convention with concrete and strong commitments under international control. The initiative to establish a global fund for environmental protection deserves most serious consideration. My country is grateful to the United Nations for its valuable efforts in coordinating, initiating and discussing Chernobyl-related issues. This is extremely important to us. At the same time Belarus is deeply concerned over the fact that, alongside the ongoing discussion related to the closure of the Chernobyl reactor, the problem of mitigating the medical and environmental after-effects of the Chernobyl catastrophe — the main burden of which has been borne by our young State — are being pushed aside.

We are deeply concerned over the financial situation of the Organization. Admitting that Belarus now finds itself among the States with the biggest debts to the United Nations, we cannot but underscore that this situation has emerged as a result of objective financial and economic difficulties experienced by Belarus at this complex stage of its development, as well as of the unjust distribution of United Nations expenses among the Member States. Excessive rates of assessment for the United Nations regular budget and for peacekeeping

operations has now resulted in one of the founding States of the United Nations being unable, for objective reasons, to fulfil its financial obligations to the Organization. In view of this, we support all-round measures aimed at reforming the entire financial system of the United Nations and the search for fair forms of financial cooperation between the Organization and the Member States, in particular those whose arrears have accumulated due to a number of reasons beyond their control.

Finally, the wide-scale reforming of the United Nations system coincides with the democratic transformations taking place in a number of States, Belarus being one of them. Given that the reforms now under way are of immediate concern to each and every citizen of our country, we are fully aware of their significance at this crucial juncture in the development of international relations. Comprehension of the importance of that factor enabled Belarus to secure public law and order, stability and peace in its territory. Yet sometimes it is not so easy for the major political actors to achieve a coordinated approach to tackling the intricate problems facing Belarus at this transitional juncture in its history. Thus, it has become of vital importance today to find an efficient balance between the legislative, the executive and the judicial branches of power and to ensure their stable interaction. This is precisely the purpose of the upcoming popular referendum in Belarus, which is being held at the initiative of President Alyaksandr Lukashenka.

The fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations has also breathed new life into its ideals and strengthened our belief that the United Nations is a unique and genuinely integral part of international life. I am convinced that the fifty-first session of the General Assembly can and must become a starting point for effectively reforming the United Nations, which will be possible only through the joint efforts of all Member States of the Organization.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Luis Valencia Rodríguez, Chairman of the delegation of Ecuador.

Mr. Valencia Rodríguez (Ecuador) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I wish to extend to President Razali Ismail Ecuador's warm congratulations on his election, which is a tribute to his valuable contributions to the work of our world Organization in his capacity as Permanent Representative of Malaysia. I wish also to convey our thanks to Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, President of the General Assembly at its fiftieth session, for the fruitful work he accomplished.

I wish to express to the delegation of Bulgaria the heartfelt condolences of the Government of Ecuador for the irreparable loss it has suffered with the killing of former Prime Minister Lukanov. Our condolences go also to the family and friends of that eminent man.

On the threshold of the twenty-first century, we remain immersed in a process of profound change on the international scene, resulting from the end of the ideological confrontation between East and West. We are seeing the emergence of new opportunities for peace-building, for the strengthening of development, for the diffusion of democracy and for stepped-up international cooperation, especially politically. Ecuador believes that we should take maximum advantage of these positive factors and use them as a basis on which to devise the most ambitious programme possible for the coming years, with the goal of a world of equity and justice, a world in which future generations can live well, in secure conditions, at peace with themselves and with the environment on which their very survival depends.

In these circumstances, the essential objective of our Organization, as established in the Charter, remains the same: the maintenance of international peace and security. To attain this objective, it is imperative that all Member States reaffirm their faith in the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter. Most fundamentally, this means banning the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or the political independence of any State, as well as the obligation to settle international disputes exclusively by peaceful means. The larger goal of international security should be seen as embracing the political, economic and social conditions in which all nations develop.

While the danger of worldwide nuclear destruction has receded, Ecuador continues to maintain that preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons is not an end in itself, but an intermediate step towards the ultimate objective of totally banning and completely destroying all nuclear weapons. Ecuador regrets that the Conference on Disarmament was unable to adopt by consensus the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). It takes the view, however, that the text supported by most States, which has been endorsed by the General Assembly and opened for signature by States, is an important step towards that objective. Ecuador has signed that instrument. Although it is not the ideal instrument for which the Conference on Disarmament was striving, it would be a mistake to start this long and arduous process all over again. Ecuador will also continue to work for

general and complete disarmament, which will eliminate once and for all the grave danger inherent in weapons of mass destruction and end the squandering of scarce national resources on weapons.

Ecuador voted in favour of resolution 49/75 K, by which the General Assembly requested the International Court of Justice to issue an Advisory Opinion as to whether international law authorizes the threat or use of nuclear weapons in any circumstances. We welcome the Court's unanimous finding that

"There is in neither customary nor conventional international law any specific authorization of the threat or use of nuclear weapons."

The finding also states that

"A threat or use of force by means of nuclear weapons that is contrary to Article 2, paragraph 4, of the United Nations Charter and that fails to meet all the requirements of Article 51, is unlawful."

In its finding, the Court also expresses the view that

"There exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control."

The Government of Ecuador believes that the General Assembly should endorse these views, which form a basis for the continued work of the international community to bring about the definitive banning of nuclear weapons.

Terrorism in all its forms and manifestations; organized international crime; and the production, consumption and trafficking of all illicit drugs continue to pose grave threats that undermine international stability and the security and well-being of society in general. To eradicate these evils, we need a coordinated and persistent international effort in which all States should be involved, in accordance with their capacity and with their degree of responsibility. In this regard, Ecuador is complying appropriately with its obligations.

We are currently experiencing the rapid globalization and interdependence of the world economy, which requires the adoption of rational domestic policies and a favourable international economic environment. At present, the promotion of economic development is reflected in the liberalization of trade agreements and the establishment of

an open multilateral commercial system. This new state of affairs has favourable effects; however, in certain circumstances, it produces adverse consequences. For that reason it is imperative that policies and the international environment be structured so as to derive maximum benefit from these trends and minimize the negative effects. Ecuador is mindful of this situation, but would also like to stress the need, as expressed by the Heads of State and Government in the Declaration on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations, to

"Invigorate the dialogue and partnership between all countries in order to secure the existence of a favourable political and economic environment for the promotion of international cooperation for development based on the imperatives of mutual benefit and interest and genuine interdependence, while recognizing that each country is ultimately responsible for its own development". (*resolution 50/6, para. 8*)

In this regard, direct foreign investment in developing countries is particularly important because it accelerates the economic process to the benefit of both the investors and of the recipient economies.

The United Nations should continue to be an important catalyst in support of the economic and social development of the developing countries and of the disadvantaged and marginalized sectors. The world Organization has sponsored global conferences to address vital problems related to the environment, population, social development, crime, the advancement of women, the protection of the family, human settlements, trade and development, and public administration. The recommendations and initiatives adopted at those conferences have set genuine priorities for the international community in the promotion of development. Nevertheless, what has been achieved to date in many of these fields is still uneven and insufficient. Therefore, Ecuador reaffirms that, in order to effectively implement these decisions, there needs to be a rapid mobilization of the resources for development, as well as a more efficient use of those resources. Without such an international commitment, all the conferences' recommendations and other similar pronouncements will only enlarge the overloaded archives of our foreign ministries. Given the persistence of such environmental problems as the lack of drinking water, threats to biological diversity, the depletion of the ozone layer, the warming of the atmosphere, the diminishing soil productivity, desertification and diminishing food security,

Governments of both industrialized and developing countries must take joint, concerted action.

Ecuador, faithful to its democratic traditions, has recently provided an example of a transparent electoral process and of respect for the popular will. As a result, President Abdalá Bucaram was elected to lead the country, and for the first time in Ecuadorian history, a woman, Mrs. Rosalía Arteaga, has been elected Vice-President of the Republic. The new Administration's first and principal actions are focused on social policies, especially on combating poverty and on a wide-ranging national programme of low-cost housing.

Given its faith in the will of the people, Ecuador welcomes the growing trend towards democratization: more and more countries have adopted multi-party systems, organized free and fair elections and begun to transform themselves into more open and participative societies. However, Ecuador also believes that this process does not happen spontaneously but requires the understanding and support of the international community so as to create and sustain conditions conducive to such changes. In other words, democracy and hunger are antithetical elements that cannot exist together.

The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action — which is steadily gaining practical force and effectiveness — reaffirm the solemn commitment of all States to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms. The interrelationship between human rights, democracy and development articulated in that Declaration and Programme, calls for a comprehensive and global approach to ensure the promotion and protection of human rights.

In the Declaration on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations, the Heads of State and Government reaffirmed that all human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated. They made a commitment, among other things, to protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms; to strengthen laws, policies and programmes to secure the full and equal participation of women in all spheres of political, civil, economic, social and cultural life; to promote and protect the rights of the child; to ensure protection of the rights of people who are particularly vulnerable, including young people, the disabled, the elderly and migrant workers; and to promote and protect the rights of indigenous populations. Ecuador considers that human rights has become one of the most important spheres of United Nations action. It supports the work of the United Nations High

Commissioner for Human Rights in his efforts to carry out this broad and important programme of activities.

It should be recalled that economic and social problems are not restricted to the most disadvantaged countries. A number of societies are seriously threatened by increasing external debt, the instability of the international financial system, persistent unemployment, intractable poverty and increasingly destructive waves of crime and corruption. The inequality gap between developed and developing countries remains unacceptably large and continues to widen. More than 1 billion people lack drinking water, and 1.7 billion do not have access to proper health facilities. This means that poverty continues to affect more than one fifth of the world's population. Hunger, malnutrition, health problems, a total lack of housing, limited access to education and other public services and resources, social exclusion, alienation and violence are only a few of the many factors associated with poverty. The fight against this scourge is one of the greatest challenges that the United Nations and its specialized agencies must face in close cooperation with non-governmental organizations and the international community as a whole. Since 1990, commitments have been made and goals established, with a view to achieving the overall objective of eradicating poverty in partnership with all the actors associated with development. In this context, and from this lofty rostrum, Ecuador would like to issue an urgent appeal to all Member States to intensify international cooperation, in its many aspects, in order to fight vigorously together to ensure that these commitments and goals have practical and effective application. We must remember that poverty is not only a malady which destroys the societies directly affected, it is also a corrosive contagion that prevents international relations from developing on a basis of justice and equity.

Ecuador is a multi-ethnic country with sizeable and important indigenous groups and significant black minorities. For this reason, it considers that the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People, declared by this General Assembly, establishes a programme of action that will restore the rights of those peoples, which have systematically been victims of a long historical process of exclusion and discrimination. We believe it is incumbent on the entire international community to build universal understanding of the fact that protecting those populations also means preserving the cultural heritage of humankind. Ecuador trusts that it can rely on international cooperation in order to

appropriately fulfil its obligation in this respect, in coordination with its national programmes.

The founders of the United Nations must have realized that they could not foresee exactly what the world would be like 50 years hence. On the other hand, they established basic objectives and principles and incorporated them in a Charter that is sufficiently flexible to enable the Organization to serve its peaceful objectives and to evolve in response to new challenges. This is why the Charter, and its purposes and principles, has endured. However, today's changed circumstances, which determine the functioning of the United Nations, demand a modification in the structure and the operational practices of our Organization. It is necessary, among other things, to increase the United Nations capacity to prevent conflicts through preventive diplomacy, peacekeeping and peacebuilding. We need better ways and means to respond to the challenges of emergency situations. And, along with all of this, it is essential to fully carry out the work of economic and social development. The General Assembly must be revitalized as the pre-eminent organ in which all Member States exercise on an equal footing their rights and duties as set forth in the Charter. Equitable representation in the Security Council must be assured, and its size must be in proportion with the number of Member States. It must cease being an elitist organ with antidemocratic privileges, and the efficiency and transparency of its work must be enhanced. The Economic and Social Council must regain its essential original functions as set out in the Charter: primarily, to promote well-being and to improve living standards for all the inhabitants of the Earth. The current financial crisis is seriously affecting the United Nations ability to fulfil the lofty objectives set forth in the Charter. The greatest debtors should set an example of their readiness to fulfil their obligations. Only if there is a general willingness to provide the United Nations with the resources it needs, as well as the necessary political support, will it be possible for the global Organization to live up to the trust and hopes that humankind has vested in it.

I wish to inform the General Assembly that since the last session, as regards the peacemaking process being carried out pursuant to the Itamaraty Declaration between Ecuador and Peru, and with the participation of the guarantor countries — Argentina, Brazil, Chile and the United States — several meetings have taken place at both the diplomatic and military levels. At these there has been significant progress, progress that my delegation regards as conducive to finalizing the procedures for discussions on the substance of the border dispute between the two countries. The Government of Ecuador will continue to

work towards the achievement of the ultimate goal, which is no less than a fair, definitive and honourable solution to the problem.

The Acting President: I now call on Mr. Dioncounda Traore, Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mali and for Malians living abroad.

Mr. Traore (Mali) (*interpretation from French*): Allow me to begin by expressing, on behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Mali, heartfelt congratulations to the President on his election to lead the fifty-first regular session of the General Assembly. His election reflects the trust and esteem he enjoys in this Organization because of his great diplomatic skills and his vast experience of international relations. While this is an honour for him, it also honours his country, Malaysia, a friend of my country's and one that plays an important role in international affairs, particularly within the Non-Aligned Movement.

I am therefore convinced that the President will conduct the business of the fifty-first session in a competent and well-advised manner. He can certainly count on the support of the Republic of Mali to contribute to the success of his mission. Allow me also to thank his predecessor, Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, for the outstanding work he accomplished during his term of office. Finally, I should like, on behalf of my delegation, to pay well-deserved homage to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for his courageous action and tireless efforts for peace and understanding among peoples.

The end of the cold war gave the peoples of the world cause to hope for the advent of a new era marked by the promotion of more stable and balanced international relations. To this end, the international community must mobilize to find just and lasting solutions to the many hotbeds of tension and conflict that jeopardize international peace and security.

In this respect, Mali welcomes the qualitative development of the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We welcome the holding of elections on 14 September, which marked a decisive stage for the future of the country. We exhort the international community to work to preserve and consolidate this newly restored peace.

We likewise welcome the possibilities that arose at the latest Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) summit in Liberia for a settlement based on

national reconciliation and the restoration of democratically elected institutions. Mali has worked steadfastly to find a solution to the crisis in Liberia and is prepared to make available a battalion to the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG).

Likewise, Mali supports the efforts undertaken by the international community to assist the people of Burundi to establish a lasting peace and national reconciliation. Mali also supports United Nations efforts to establish a just and lasting peace in Angola.

The international community must do everything possible in Somalia to help bring about reconciliation and the establishment of national institutions that are supported and trusted by all Somalis.

Recent developments on the question of Western Sahara require that our Organization work even more intensively towards the holding of a referendum, in keeping with the relevant resolutions adopted on the matter.

Mali has always reaffirmed its support for international law and is concerned at the continued sanctions imposed on Libya, which have compounded the sufferings of the Libyan people, with whom my country reiterates its solidarity.

Like other countries in the international community, Mali is seriously concerned over recent developments in the situation in the Middle East. My country remains convinced that in order to settle the Israeli-Arab conflict, there is no alternative to the possibilities offered by the Madrid Peace Conference. Mali therefore calls for the continuation of the peace process and for compliance with the commitments previously undertaken.

To promote more stable and balanced international relations, the present mechanisms for the consolidation of peace need to be strengthened; but we also need to find new tools. The Agenda for Peace opens new possibilities in this area.

Accordingly, Mali welcomed the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty as a historic stage in the strengthening of general and complete disarmament. We likewise welcomed the adoption on 11 April 1996 of the Pelindaba Treaty, which made Africa a nuclear-weapon-free zone. My country also hopes that further progress might be made to eliminate anti-personnel mines.

Mali has demonstrated its commitment to strengthening the process of general and complete disarmament through specific national and international initiatives. Accordingly, in 1994, the President of the Republic of Mali, His Excellency Mr. Alpha Oumar Konaré, requested and obtained special assistance from the Secretary-General of the United Nations to establish a consultative mission responsible for studying ways and means to stem the proliferation of small arms in the Sahelo-Saharan region. Indeed, our countries, which are not arms producers, have become lucrative markets for the war industry. Where did these weapons come from? What are their transit points? An answer to these questions, in my delegation's view, would make it possible to find ways and means to guarantee that the people of the affected countries enjoy a safe environment conducive to pursuing development.

Besides the support of other countries in the Sahelo-Saharan region, Mali's initiative was also backed by other regions during the forty-ninth and fiftieth sessions of the General Assembly, namely through the adoption of resolutions 49/75 G and 50/70 H. Mali's initiative helped give rise to our Organization's now-famous concept of micro-disarmament, which seeks to draw the attention of the international community to the disastrous consequences of small weapons, particularly in the developing countries, where they are used mostly to fuel conflicts.

A better-structured and more united international order seems today to be the very precondition for international peace and security. Development is one of the major challenges that our Organization must meet today. As Pope Paul VI has stressed,

"Development is another word for peace."

Thus, in order to establish the basis for a lasting peace, the problems of poverty, destitution and social marginalization must therefore be given priority at the United Nations.

I should like in this respect to stress the great importance Mali attaches to the drafting of an Agenda for Development, the indispensable counterpart to the Agenda for Peace. This entails the organization of international cooperation for development on a new basis, an area in which my country is working with resolve. The role of the United Nations system in the development process also must be strengthened.

In this connection, the Agenda for Development — which my delegation hopes will be adopted at this session of the General Assembly — will make it possible to refocus the world's attention on cooperation for development, particularly by encouraging new, more complete and more effective approaches to development. It could also provide a way to strengthen coordination within the United Nations system, particularly by recognizing the Organization as a network of institutions responsible for the economic and social development of the Member States.

In this respect, because of the persistent foreign-debt crisis of the countries of the South and the dwindling of official development assistance, the question of development financing requires special attention.

The Agenda for Development should likewise take into account the recommendations contained in the Plans of Action adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro; the International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo; the World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen; the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing; and the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, held in Istanbul.

The Agenda for Development clearly must give special attention to Africa. The socio-economic situation of our continent is indeed of great concern. Africa, which is confronting all kinds of epidemic and endemic diseases — including malaria and AIDS — has only one doctor for every 18,000 people, as compared to one doctor for fewer than 400 people in developed countries. More than 80 million school-age African children do not have access to primary or secondary education. More than one third of Africa's population suffers from famine, and more than 23 million children are malnourished. Finally, Africa is reeling from an external debt that in 1995 was estimated to be \$322 billion, the debt servicing of which absorbs more than one third of its export earnings.

Given this situation, in an increasingly interdependent world, the international community must show solidarity with Africa. That is why a solidarity pact between Africa and the rest of the international community was sealed with the adoption of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s. As we know, under the terms of this New Agenda, Africa solemnly reaffirms that Africans themselves are primarily responsible for the economic and social development of the continent, while the international community undertakes to support Africa's efforts in attaining its development objectives.

Commendable efforts have been made by African countries in implementing this New Agenda. In the political and economic spheres, in particular, these have been achieved by consolidating the democratic process, by promoting investments and by taking account of environmental and population problems in development policies. Mali has thus established a policy for economic recovery and improved public financing. Macro-economic goals, on the whole, have been attained.

A broad range of structural measures has been implemented through price liberalization; privatization; the elimination or restructuring of many public enterprises; and the reform of the agricultural sector, with a view to reducing costs and to increasing and diversifying production. These tangible results enabled Mali in February 1996 to conclude a new three-year agreement for the period 1996-1998 in the framework of the Reinforced Structural Adjustment Facility.

Mindful of the need to accompany the promotion of economic growth with resolute efforts in the social domain to improve significantly the living standards of peoples and to reduce poverty permanently, my Government has expanded social services. In addition, priority in socio-economic development programmes has been given to women.

Since 26 March 1991, Mali has continued its steady progress towards consolidating its regained peace and building a State based on the rule of law. The qualitative developments that have taken place in Mali's northern regions show clearly the determination of Mali's young democracy to tackle and resolve all problems in a concerted and peaceful way, with the active participation of all players and with scrupulous respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The organization of the "Flame of Peace" ceremony was an eloquent illustration of this. It was a symbolic ceremony to destroy the stockpiles of several thousand weapons that were surrendered by ex-combatants of the Mouvement et Fronts Unis de l'Azawad and the Mouvement Patriotique Malien Ganda Koy. It took place on 27 March 1996 in Timbuktu under the presidency of the Head of State of Mali, His Excellency Mr. Alpha Oumar Konaré, and in the presence of the President of the Republic of Ghana, the current President of ECOWAS and several ministerial delegations of Mali's neighbouring countries. The United Nations, which contributed to the peace efforts through the Department of Political Affairs and the United Nations Development Programme as well

as to the small-arms collection process, was also represented by an important delegation.

During that ceremony the Mouvement et Fronts Unis de l'Azawad and the Mouvement Patriotique Malien Ganda Koy issued a joint declaration under which they

"solemnly and irreversibly proclaim the dissolution of their respective movements and fronts".

These positive developments in northern Mali mean that real prospects now exist for integration and socio-economic development in the region. We therefore appeal to the international community to support the efforts of the Government of Mali to consolidate democracy in the country; to continue to strengthen the peace that has been established with the participation of the country's various communities; and to show its solidarity concretely, by providing the necessary humanitarian assistance to meet the needs of returning refugees and to help promote their reintegration.

It is thus important to undertake urgent work to develop the regions concerned by, *inter alia*, reintegrating displaced peoples, restoring our administration, boosting agricultural production and improving the functioning of public services, in particular in the areas of education, health and justice.

I take this opportunity to urgently appeal to Mali's development partners quickly and effectively to implement this programme, which, in the long run, aims at development within a State based on a strengthened rule of law and on democracy and human rights. Respect for the rule of law is of major importance to Mali's Third Republic, which makes the promotion and defence of human rights one of its priorities.

In this connection I should also note the institutionalization, which has now been going on for two years, of the Space for Democratic Discourse, which enables individuals, civil society and political parties to make direct and public appeals to the Government on 10 December every year with regard to the respect of human rights in Mali. We likewise have institutionalized a children's parliament, which provides a forum for the free expression of Mali's children to assist the public authorities in implementing the national plan of action for the survival, development and protection of children.

Mali — one of the six countries that initiated the World Summit for Children in 1990 — welcomed the

commemorative meeting held on 30 September 1996 to review the progress made and to give thought to the additional steps that need to be taken on behalf of children.

The consolidation of Mali's young democracy requires also the harmonious organization of relations between civilians and the military. With the support of the United Nations, the Government of Mali held a seminar on this subject last July. A code of good conduct is being drafted in this connection.

I should like to underscore here, simply but forcefully, the importance Mali attaches to human rights, in particular the rights of women and children. We are convinced that the role played by our Organization must be backed up by concrete actions that stress the right to education, health and life.

The international economic situation clearly shows that the gap between developed and developing countries is widening. By generating an increase in inequalities and in the risk of social upheavals, this imbalance is making the future of the world increasingly uncertain. Given the situation, the international community must find adequate solutions.

It is imperative that we find an answer to the external debt problem of the countries of the South. In spite of the progress made in this area, relief measures for debt servicing remain insufficient. My delegation therefore makes an urgent appeal that the ongoing discussions at the current meetings of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund on the creation of a special fund aimed at considerably reducing the multilateral debt of poor countries under structural adjustment result in a successful outcome.

My delegation deeply appreciates the important extension of \$500 million, intended to reduce the debt of African countries, made by the Group of Seven major industrialized countries last June at their summit meeting in Lyons. This is an encouraging sign and an example to follow.

It is just as important to support the efforts of the African countries to diversify their economies and the range of their commodities. It is also necessary to reverse the current trend towards disinvestment and dwindling financial resources destined for Africa.

We should facilitate the access of African products to world markets, particularly by lifting the tariff and non-tariff barriers that affect its finished, semi-finished and manufactured goods. They should also receive preferential treatment, as provided in the Final Act of the Uruguay Round concluded in Marrakesh.

Finally, the international community should give its full support to the Secretary-General's United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for Africa so that it does not suffer the same fate as the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development.

In addition to the critical economic and social situation in Africa, there is the problem of the least developed countries. For this reason, my country appeals to the international community to implement urgently the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s.

Mali also welcomes the proclamation of 1996 as the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty. We hope that the international community will achieve the goals of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty.

My country hopes that the next World Food Summit, to be held in November in Rome, will make it possible for the international community to reaffirm its commitment to ensuring that poverty-eradication strategies are fully integrated into all United Nations initiatives.

Mali has signed and ratified most international arrangements regarding the environment and therefore welcomes the convening of a special session devoted to a review of the progress made by Agenda 21. Mali intends to continue to work towards the elaboration of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa. Mali is therefore pleased at how fast the necessary ratification of 50 Member States was achieved. My delegation is nevertheless concerned about the deadlock on the question of a world mechanism. Mali believes that the mechanism should serve as a data bank and a supplier of the resources necessary to implement national plans to combat desertification.

Our Organization faces new challenges, both in the consolidation of peace and in economic and social development. Its role is constantly growing, and increasing numbers of voices throughout the world appeal to it. In order to meet the challenges of the day, our Organization

must have a sound and adequate financial basis. It must also carry out the necessary reforms so that it can be more effective and thus meet the aspirations of peoples for security, justice and development. Accordingly, these reforms must apply to the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Secretariat, but particularly to the specialized and development agencies responsible for elaborating and implementing development programmes.

This is an ambitious challenge, and Africa must contribute significantly to efforts in that direction. The international community must renew its trust in Africa by giving a second term of office to the Head of our Organization, in keeping with past practice.

Programme of work

The President: I should like to draw the attention of all members to document A/INF/51/3, which contains a tentative programme of work and schedule of plenary meetings for the month of October and for the beginning of November.

I should like to point out that this schedule was prepared to facilitate the organization of the work of delegations and to help ensure that the relevant documentation is ready for the discussion of the respective items. The lists of speakers for all the items listed in document A/INF/51/3 are now open.

I will, in due course, announce the dates for the consideration of other agenda items as well as keep the Assembly informed of any additions or changes.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.